

Official Report of the
One Hundred Seventieth
Annual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center
Salt Lake City, Utah

April 1 and 2, 2000

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Report of the 170th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 170th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 1, 2000, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, April 1 and 2, 2000. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, April 1, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference and conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday morning sessions. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon session. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Sunday afternoon session.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, videotapes of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations and the LDS Radio Network carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. These proceedings were also broadcast live over the Internet by LDSWorld.com.

General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the sessions:

The First Presidency: Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

The Quorum of the Twelve: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight,

Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring

The Presidency of the Seventy: L. Aldin Porter, Harold G. Hillam, Earl C. Tingey, D. Todd Christofferson, Marlin K. Jensen, David E. Sorensen, and Ben B. Banks

The First Quorum of the Seventy: Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Merrill J. Bateman, William R. Bradford, Monte J. Brough, F. Enzio Busche, John K. Carmack, Sheldon F. Child, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Quentin L. Cook, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Charles Didier, Loren C. Dunn, Vaughn J. Featherstone, John H. Groberg, Bruce C. Hafen, Donald L. Hallstrom, F. Melvin Hammond, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, L. Lionel Kendrick, W. Rolfe Kerr, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Cree-L Kofford, John M. Madsen, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Alexander B. Morrison, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Glenn L. Pace, Rex D. Pinegar, Hugh W. Pinnock, Carl B. Pratt, Ronald A. Rasband, Lynn G. Robbins, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Francisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, and W. Craig Zwick

The Second Quorum of the Seventy: Richard D. Allred, Athos M. Amorím, E. Ray Bateman, L. Edward Brown, Eran A. Call, Douglas L. Callister, Val R. Christensen, Darwin B. Christenson, Richard E. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Keith Crockett, Adhemar Damiani, Duane B. Gerrard, H. Aldridge Gillespie, Ronald T. Halverson, Wayne M. Hancock, J. Kent Jolley, W. Don Ladd, James O. Mason, Richard J. Maynes, Dale E. Miller, Earl M. Monson, Merrill C. Oaks, Robert C. Oaks, Stephen B. Oveson,

Bruce D. Porter, H. Bryan Richards, Ned B. Roueché, Dennis E. Simmons, Donald L. Staheli, David R. Stone, H. Bruce Stucki, Jerald L. Taylor, D. Lee Tobler, Richard E. Turley Sr., Gordon T. Watts, Stephen A. West, Robert J. Whetten, Richard H. Winkel, Richard B. Wirthlin, Ray H. Wood, and Robert S. Wood

The Presiding Bishopric: H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, area, stake, and ward officers.

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 170th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 1, 2000, at 10:00 A.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop, Mack Wilberg, and Barlow Bradford directed the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist. To begin this session, the choir sang "The Morning Breaks." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My dear brothers and sisters, we welcome you to the 170th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In this, the first general session of the year 2000, we are assembled in this magnificent new Conference Center.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand at the over-

flow locations in the Tabernacle and Assembly Hall. We likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies seated on the stand here in the Conference Center.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop, Mack Wilberg, and Barlow Bradford, with John Longhurst at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "The Morning Breaks" and will now favor us with "Redeemer of Israel." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder F. Enzio Busche of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Redeemer of Israel."

Elder F. Enzio Busche offered the invocation.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

New Conference Center filled to capacity

My dearly beloved brethren and sisters, what a magnificent sight you are, this vast congregation of Latter-day

Saints gathered together in this new and wonderful hall.

The organ is not completed, and there are various construction details yet to be attended to. But fortunately the

work is far enough along that we are able to use it for this conference. A year or so ago in speaking concerning it, I expressed the opinion that we may not be able to fill it initially. It seats three and a half times the capacity of the Tabernacle. But already we are in trouble. People are filling all of the seats.

During the four general sessions and the priesthood session, we will be able to accommodate about 100,000. We had requests for 370,000 tickets. The Tabernacle and Assembly Hall will serve as overflow. But with all of this, many, very many, will be disappointed. We apologize. We ask for your forgiveness. We are powerless to do anything about it. So many wanted to attend this first conference in the new hall. Unfortunately, that is impossible. I was somewhat shocked to learn that the people from my own ward, who are nearby and whom I love, have received no tickets.

But we are grateful for the enthusiasm of the Latter-day Saints concerning this new meeting place. I hope that enthusiasm will continue and that we shall have a full house at every conference in the future.

This is the newest in a series of meeting places constructed by our people. When first they came to this valley, they built a bowery. It shaded them from the sun but provided no warmth and very little comfort. Then they built the old Tabernacle. That was followed by the new Tabernacle, which has served us so very well for more than 130 years.

Now in this historic season, when we mark the birth of a new century and the beginning of a new millennium, we have built this new and wonderful Conference Center.

Each of the undertakings of the past was a bold venture, and particularly the Tabernacle. It was unique in its design. No one had constructed a building like that before. It is still unique. What a wonderful hall it has been and will con-

tinue to be. It will go on living, for I believe that buildings have lives of their own. It will go on serving long into the unforeseeable future.

Construction was a bold undertaking

The building of this structure has been a bold undertaking. We worried about it. We prayed about it. We listened for the whisperings of the Spirit concerning it. And only when we felt the confirming voice of the Lord did we determine to go forward.

At the general conference of April 1996, I said:

"I regret that many who wish to meet with us in the Tabernacle this morning are unable to get in. There are very many out on the grounds. This unique and remarkable hall, built by our pioneer forebears and dedicated to the worship of the Lord, comfortably seats about 6,000. Some of you seated on those hard benches for two hours may question the word *comfortably*.

"My heart reaches out to those who wish to get in and could not be accommodated. About a year ago I suggested to the Brethren that perhaps the time has come when we should study the feasibility of constructing another dedicated house of worship on a much larger scale that would accommodate three or four times the number who can be seated in this building" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 88-89; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 65).

The vision of a new hall was clearly in mind. Various architectural schemes were studied. One was finally selected. It included a massive structure to seat 21,000 with a theater accommodating another thousand. There would be no interior pillars to obstruct the view of the speaker. There would be trees and running water on the roof.

Ground was broken July 24, 1997, the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the

first pioneers in this valley. That was an historic event.

Prophetic statements and actions

We did not know it at the time, but in 1853 Brigham Young, in speaking of temples, said, "The time will come when . . . we shall build . . . on the top, groves and fish ponds" (*Deseret News Weekly*, 30 Apr. 1853, 46).

In 1924 Elder James E. Talmage of the Council of the Twelve wrote: "I have long seen the possible erection of a great pavilion on the north side of the Tabernacle, seating perhaps twenty thousand people or even double that number, with amplifiers capable of making all hear the addresses given from the Tabernacle stands, and in addition to this a connection with the broadcasting system, with receivers in the several chapels or other meeting houses throughout the intermountain region" (journal of James E. Talmage, 29 Aug. 1924, Special Collections and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah).

In 1940 the First Presidency and the Twelve had their architect draw up a plan of a building that would seat 19,000 and would stand where this building stands. That was 60 years ago. They thought about it, they talked about it, but finally they dropped the idea entirely.

These statements and actions were wonderfully prophetic. We knew nothing about them. All of them have come to our attention since we began this construction.

We have not built a temple with trees and fishponds on the roof. But on this edifice we have many trees and running water. Brigham Young may have foreseen this structure very near the temple. We have what Brother Talmage thought of and much, much more. These services will not only be heard by all who are seated in the Conference Center, they

will be carried by radio, television, and cable, and they will be transmitted by satellite to Europe, to Mexico, to South America. We reach far beyond the intermountain area of which Brother Talmage spoke. We reach beyond the confines of the United States and Canada. We essentially reach across the world.

A truly magnificent building

This is truly a magnificent building. I know of no other comparable structure built primarily as a hall of worship that is so large and that will seat so many. It is beautiful in its design, in its appointments, and in its wonderful utility. It is built of reinforced concrete to the highest seismic codes required in this area. The concrete is faced with granite taken from the same quarry as was the stone for the temple. Both buildings even carry the blemishes of that granite.

The interior is beautiful and wonderfully impressive. It is huge, and it is constructed in such a way that nothing obstructs the view of the speaker. The carpets, the marble floors, the decorated walls, the handsome hardware, the wonderful wood all bespeak utility, with a touch of elegance.

It will prove to be a great addition to this city. Not only will our general conferences be held here, and some other religious meetings, but it will serve as a cultural center for the very best artistic presentations. We hope that those not of our faith will come here, experience the ambience of this beautiful place, and feel grateful for its presence. We thank all who have worked so hard to bring it to this stage—the architects, with whom we have had many meetings; the general contractors, three of whom have worked together; the subcontractors; the hundreds of craftsmen who have labored here; the construction supervisor; the city building inspectors; and everyone who has had a hand in this project. They

have all joined in a herculean effort so that we might meet together this morning. Many of them are with us, I am happy to say.

The black walnut pulpit

And now, my brothers and sisters, I would like to tell you about another feature of this wonderful building. If I get a little personal and even a little sentimental, I hope you will forgive me.

I love trees. When I was a boy we lived on a farm in the summer, a fruit farm. Every year at this season we planted trees. I think I have never missed a spring since I was married, except for two or three years when we were absent from the city, that I have not planted trees, at least one or two—fruit trees, shade trees, ornamental trees, and spruce, fir, and pine among the conifers. I love trees.

Well, some 36 years ago I planted a black walnut. It was in a crowded area where it grew straight and tall to get the sunlight. A year ago, for some reason it died. But walnut is a precious furniture wood. I called Brother Ben Banks of the Seventy, who, before giving his full time to the Church, was in the business of hardwood lumber. He brought his two sons, one a bishop and the other recently released from a bishopric and who now run the business, to look at the tree. From all they could tell it was solid, good, and beautiful wood. One of them suggested that it would make a pulpit for this hall. The idea excited me. The tree was cut down and then cut into two heavy logs. Then followed the long process of drying, first naturally and then kiln drying. The logs were cut into boards at a sawmill in Salem, Utah. The boards were then taken to Fetzer's woodworking plant, where expert craftsmen designed

and built this magnificent pulpit with that wood.

The end product is beautiful. I wish all of you could examine it closely. It represents superb workmanship, and here I am speaking to you from the tree I grew in my backyard, where my children played and also grew.

It is an emotional thing for me. I have planted another black walnut or two. I will be long gone before they mature. When that day comes and this beautiful pulpit has grown old, perhaps one of them will do to make a replacement. To Elder Banks and his sons, Ben and Bradford, and to the skilled workers who have designed and built this, I offer my profound thanks for making it possible to have a small touch of mine in this great hall where the voices of prophets will go out to all the world in testimony of the Redeemer of mankind.

And so to all who have made this sacred edifice possible, and to all of you who are here assembled on this historic occasion, I express gratitude and appreciation, my love and my thanks for this day and this sacred and beautiful house of worship, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "We Love Thy House, O God."

President Hinckley

The choir has just sung "We Love Thy House, O God."

We shall now be pleased to hear from President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Harold G. Hillam of the Presidency of the Seventy.

President Boyd K. Packer

Focus on the builder, not the building

Do you think it possible for those of us who are called upon to speak to draw attention away from this wonderful building long enough to focus on the purpose for which it was built?

Perhaps it can be done with a parable and a poem.

The parable: A merchant man seeking precious jewels found at last the perfect pearl. He had the finest craftsman carve a superb jewel box and line it with blue velvet. He put his pearl of great price on display so others could share his treasure. He watched as people came to see it. Soon he turned away in sorrow. It was the box they admired, not the pearl.

The poem:

We are all blind, until we see
That in the [universal] plan
Nothing is worth the making if
It does not make the man.

Why build these [buildings] glorious,
If man unbuilted goes?
In vain we build the [world], unless
The builder also grows.¹

Jesus is baptized and tempted

In thinking of the builder, we begin half a world away and two millennia ago on the river Jordan with John the Baptist. He preached, "I . . . baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I . . . : he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire."²

"Then [came] Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him."³

"[When Jesus came] up . . . out of the water . . . , the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God [the Holy Ghost] descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

"And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."⁴

Jesus then went into the wilderness; Lucifer came tempting Him.⁵ Jesus deflected each temptation with scripture:

"It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone."⁶

"It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."⁷

"It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."⁸

Think on it carefully. When facing Perdition himself, the Lord drew upon scriptures for protection.

The promise to send the Comforter

Jesus chose from among His disciples twelve whom He ordained Apostles: Peter, James, and John; Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, Simon, James, Jude, and Judas. They were ordinary men described by the Pharisees as "unlearned and ignorant."⁹

The Twelve followed Him. He taught them.

He commanded them to teach all nations, baptizing all who would believe.¹⁰

Before He left, He promised, "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."¹¹

Jesus was crucified. On the third day He rose from the tomb. He gave further instruction to His Apostles; and then, before He ascended, He said, "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be [endowed] with power from on high."¹²

That power was not long in coming. On the day of Pentecost, the Twelve were assembled in a house:

"Suddenly there came a sound . . . of a rushing mighty wind. . . .

"And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."¹³

With that the Twelve were fully empowered.

When they spoke that day, the people marveled, for each heard it in his own language—18 different languages.¹⁴

Conferring the gift of the Holy Ghost

The Apostles set out to baptize all who would believe on their words. But baptism unto repentance was not enough.¹⁵

Paul found twelve men who had already been baptized by John the Baptist and asked, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost?" They replied, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost."¹⁶

"They were [then] baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus,"¹⁷ and "Paul . . . laid his hands upon them, [and] the Holy Ghost came on them."¹⁸

The pattern was set, as it had been from the beginning.¹⁹ Entrance into the Church of Jesus Christ is through "baptism by immersion for the remission of sins."²⁰ Then, in a separate ordinance, the priceless gift of the Holy Ghost is conferred "by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances."²¹

Authority to confer the gift was lost

Despite opposition, the Twelve established the Church of Jesus Christ; and despite persecution, it flourished.

But as the centuries passed, the flame flickered and dimmed. Ordinances were changed or abandoned. The line was broken, and the authority to confer the Holy Ghost as a gift was gone. The Dark Ages of apostasy settled over the world.

But always, as it had from the beginning, the Spirit of God inspired worthy souls.²²

We owe an immense debt to the protesters and the reformers who preserved the scriptures and translated them. They knew something had been lost. They kept the flame alive as best they could. Many of them were martyrs. But protesting was not enough; nor could reformers restore that which was gone.

In time, a great diversity of churches arose.

Authority to confer the gift was restored

When all was prepared, the Father and the Son appeared to the boy Joseph in the Grove, and those words spoken at the river Jordan were heard once again: "*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*"²³

Joseph Smith became the instrument of the Restoration.

John the Baptist restored "the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins."²⁴

Peter, James, and John restored the office of Apostle with the higher priesthood. With it came authority to confer the supernally precious gift of the Holy Ghost.²⁵

On April 6, 1830, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized. The Brethren set about to teach and to baptize. Nine months later came a correction, a revelation:

"Thou didst baptize by water unto repentance, but they received not the Holy Ghost;

"But now I give unto thee a commandment, that thou shalt baptize by water, and they shall receive the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, even as the apostles of old."²⁶

One month later that commandment was repeated: "On as many as ye shall baptize with water, ye shall lay your hands,

and they shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”²⁷

The gift is to all who repent and are baptized—boys and girls alike, women and men the same.

The Holy Ghost will show us what to do

We live in troubled times—very troubled times. We hope, we pray for better days. But that is not to be. The prophecies tell us that. We will not as a people, as families, or as individuals be exempt from the trials to come. No one will be spared the trials common to home and family, work, disappointment, grief, health, aging, ultimately death.

What then shall we do? That question was asked of the Twelve on the day of Pentecost. Peter answered, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”²⁸

He told them, “The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off.”²⁹

That same question—“What shall we do?”—was asked of the prophet Nephi. He gave the same answer that Peter had given: “Take upon you the name of Christ, by baptism . . . , then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost.”³⁰

“Do ye not remember that I said unto you that after ye had received the Holy Ghost ye could speak with the tongue of angels? . . .

“Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.

“Wherefore, now after I have spoken these words, if ye cannot understand them it will be because ye ask not, neither do ye knock; wherefore, ye are not brought into the light, but must perish in the dark.

“For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do.”³¹

We need not live in fear of the future. We have every reason to rejoice and little reason to fear. If we follow the promptings of the Spirit, we will be safe, whatever the future holds. We will be shown what to do.

We are too often inattentive to the Spirit

Christ promised that “the Father [would send] another Comforter, . . . even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”³²

Too many of us are like those whom the Lord said “[came] with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, . . . [and] at the time of their conversion, were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, *and they knew it not.*”³³

Imagine that: “And they knew it not.” It is not unusual for one to have received the gift and not really know it.

I fear this supernal gift is being obscured by programs and activities and schedules and so many meetings. There are so many places to go, so many things to do in this noisy world. We can be too busy to pay attention to the promptings of the Spirit.

The voice of the Spirit is a still, small voice—a voice that is *felt* rather than heard. It is a spiritual voice that comes into the mind as a thought put into your heart.

Cultivate the gift of the Holy Ghost

All over the world ordinary men, women, and children, not completely aware that they have the gift, bless their families, teach, preach, and minister by the Spirit within them.

In every language, the Spirit of God—the Holy Ghost—guides, or can guide, every member of the Church. Everyone is invited to come and repent and be baptized and receive of this sacred gift.

Despite opposition, the Church will flourish; and despite persecution, it will grow.

Joseph Smith was asked, “How does your religion differ from other religions?” He replied, “All other considerations were contained in the gift of the Holy Ghost.”³⁴

It is awakened with prayer and cultivated “by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.”³⁵

It can be smothered through transgression and neglect.

And soon we learn that the tempter—the adversary—uses those same channels of the mind and heart to inspire us to evil, to laziness, to contention, even to acts of darkness. He can take over our thoughts and lead us to mischief.

But each of us has agency; ever and always light presides over darkness.

The priesthood is structured to ensure an unbroken line of authority to baptize and confer the Holy Ghost. Always nearby are leaders and teachers called and set apart to teach and to correct us. We can learn to sort out the promptings from the temptations and follow the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

Holy Ghost guides, protects, comforts

It is a glorious time to live! No matter what trials await us, we can find the answer to that question, “What shall we do?” We, and those we love, will be guided and corrected and protected, and we will be comforted.

The Savior said: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”³⁶

As surely as I know that I am here and you are there, I know that Jesus is

the Christ. He lives! I know the gift of the Holy Ghost, a sacred spiritual power, can be a constant companion to every soul who will receive it. I pray that the witness of the Holy Ghost will confirm this testimony to you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Edwin Markham, “Man-Making,” in *Masterpieces of Religious Verse*, ed. James Dalton Morrison (1948), 419.
2. Matthew 3:11.
3. Matthew 3:13.
4. Matthew 3:16–17.
5. See Matthew 4:1–11.
6. Matthew 4:4.
7. Matthew 4:7.
8. Matthew 4:10.
9. Acts 4:13.
10. See Matthew 28:19.
11. John 14:26.
12. Luke 24:49.
13. Acts 2:2–4.
14. See Acts 2:7–11.
15. See Acts 2:38.
16. Acts 19:2; see also *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 263, 336.
17. Acts 19:5.
18. Acts 19:6.
19. See Moses 6:64–66.
20. Articles of Faith 1:4.
21. Articles of Faith 1:5.
22. See 1 Nephi 10:17–19.
23. Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
24. Doctrine and Covenants 13.
25. See Doctrine and Covenants 27:12–13.
26. Doctrine and Covenants 35:5–6.
27. Doctrine and Covenants 39:23.
28. Acts 2:38.
29. Acts 2:39.
30. 2 Nephi 31:13.
31. 2 Nephi 32:2–5.
32. John 14:16–17.
33. 3 Nephi 9:20; italics added.
34. *History of the Church*, 4:42.
35. Articles of Faith 1:3.
36. John 14:27.

Elder Harold G. Hillam

Lessons for future leaders

During the last general conference, a relatively insignificant thing caught my attention. It was a necktie! As a choir of young boys and girls was singing, one of the TV cameras happened upon a young boy in the choir. He thought he saw himself on the television monitor but perhaps wasn't completely sure. So this is what he did: by wiggling his tie almost unnoticeably, he knew—yes—it was really him!

This modest act triggered a flood of thoughts in my mind. Turning to look at those young boys and girls, I thought, "These children represent millions of similar other boys and girls throughout the world. What will this great Church be like when they reach the ages of the leaders here, and what part will they play in its remarkable future? Which children will hold ward or stake positions? Might a future member of the Twelve be listening to the conference or even be seated here today? Which young boy will someday preside as President of the Church when it has many more millions of members?"

As these thoughts continued in my mind, I realized that you young people will need to learn so many lessons. You will have to prepare for your awesome responsibilities in a time when the adversary seems to go unchecked by the world in his opposition to all that is good and decent. You will need to learn many lessons, but let me share three lessons that I believe are essential.

Develop a sense of respect

The first essential lesson is to develop a sense of respect for things that are sacred and a respect for other people, especially your elders.

The Lord taught Moses about sacred things and places. When Moses approached the burning bush that was not

consumed by fire, the Lord commanded, "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5). We too have the opportunity to stand in holy places. Temples, Church buildings, and your home should command your respect because they are sacred.

You will need to recognize and value all that the Lord has revealed as being sacred. One of the most significant is the sacred nature of your own body. The Apostle Paul spoke of our bodies as temples given to us by God (see 1 Corinthians 6:19). What a tragedy if you deprived yourself of life's opportunities by willfully disfiguring your body or numbing your mind with drugs. Don't use your body for immoral acts. Clothe it modestly, and leave the sloppy dress craze behind. When you have the courage to dress modestly and avoid fads in clothing, you will find that self-respect is a companion of obedience and that the Lord will help you.

How we act and dress reflects how we regard where we are and who we are. Let me demonstrate. One of the natural occurrences in missionary work is the change in new converts, especially little boys, young men, and fathers. When they go to Church meetings, they want to look like the missionaries. Now, that tells us a lot about the importance of looking like a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The words of the prophets as found in ancient scripture and in modern-day revelation are sacred also. They are the words of the Lord to us. Treat them with respect by listening carefully and then conforming your lives to them.

I urge you young people to develop the habit of always showing respect, courtesy, and deference to your parents and others, especially those who are

older than you. My father taught me that every person in and out of the Church has a title, such as *Mr.*, *Mrs.*, *Brother*, *Sister*, *Bishop*, *Elder*, or *President*, and that they should be addressed with respect. When I was six years old, my father reinforced this principle when I made the horrid mistake of calling our local grocer by his first name. Upon leaving the grocery store, my father taught me with firmness that I had shown a lack of respect by being so casual to an older person. I have never forgotten that experience, nor have I after 60 years forgotten the name of the grocer. I even remember his first name.

Learn and obey the commandments

The second essential lesson is to learn the commandments and obey them because you choose to. Before you can obey the commandments, you must know what they are. You *learn* the commandments by being instructed. That is why family home evening, Sunday classes, and seminary are so important. You *know* the commandments by the Spirit through prayer, your own personal study, and your own personal revelation.

You need to keep your minds clean so you can recognize and respond to the quiet whisperings of the Spirit. Select with care the information you allow to enter your mind. Avoid the cluttered clamor of the world. Television, movies, and especially the Internet can provide an open window through which you can peer into the far reaches of the world. They can bring to you information that is uplifting, good, and inspiring. But if used improperly, these media technologies can fill your mind with such unwholesome thoughts that you will be unable to hear the gentle prompting of the Spirit. Live each day so that you are able to be in tune with the Spirit like the boy prophet Samuel and you are able to respond to the Lord and say, "Speak [Lord]; for thy servant heareth" (1 Samuel 3:10).

Come to know and love the Savior

A third essential lesson is to develop a love for the Savior. *Knowing about* the Savior is a natural part of our religious education. *Knowing* the Savior requires personal obedience, prayer, a closeness to the Spirit, and revelation.

I want to speak to you teachers for a moment—you parents, priesthood leaders, bishops, stake presidents, and teachers in Primary, Young Women, Young Men, and Sunday School. The Lord has reminded everyone that "the worth of souls is great in the sight of God" (D&C 18:10). We are all responsible to teach and lead these wonderful young men and young women and touch their lives by our example. As the song says, "How will they know unless we teach them?" And maybe we could add, "How will they know unless we show them?" ("How Will They Know?" *Children's Songbook*, 182–85).

Every leader and every teacher in every part of the world has a responsibility to teach the gospel by the Spirit. The boys and girls you teach have the potential to become outstanding fathers and mothers as well as revered Church leaders of the future. May you visualize each one of them in their important future callings. Some teacher somewhere is indeed teaching a young boy who will someday sit in these seats as he serves as the Lord's prophet. What a marvelous opportunity is yours.

Prepare to be faithful leaders

And now to you, my young friend with the tie—yes, it *is* you. You and the millions like you, if you prepare well, will be the faithful mothers and fathers in the Church and the Lord's future leaders. You will be the teachers and leaders who will continue to establish the Church throughout the world. You will probably want to look in the mirror periodically and remind yourselves of the great mission that lies before you, and perhaps

you might even want to wiggle your tie just to remind yourself of your important mission ahead. May you stand straight and noble in your callings.

I pray that you young people will develop a reverence for sacred things, a respect for your elders, and a willingness to keep the commandments. I pray that you will learn to know of the Savior and have an ever-growing understanding of His Atonement. I ask the Lord to help you throughout your life to join your testimony with those of today's living prophets and apostles, who have declared:

"We bear testimony, as His duly ordained Apostles—that Jesus is the Living Christ, the immortal Son of God. He is the great King Immanuel, who stands today on the right hand of His Father. He is the light, the life, and the hope of the world. His way is the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come. God be thanked for

the matchless gift of His divine Son" ("The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles," *Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 3).

To this I also testify and witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has spoken to us, followed by Elder Harold G. Hillam of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now sing "How Firm a Foundation." Sister Coleen K. Menlove, Primary general president, will then speak to us. She will be followed by Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir and congregation sang "How Firm a Foundation."

Sister Coleen K. Menlove

Obtaining happiness

Children love stories. As a child I was immediately drawn into stories that started with the words "Once upon a time." These stories often ended with "They lived happily ever after." I have a feeling that children are not the only ones who are intrigued by those phrases. We each long to have the "once upon a time" of our lives filled with so much happiness that it becomes the "happily ever after" of our hopes and dreams.

We are living in our "once upon a time." We are experiencing a mortal probation now during our turn on earth. In our premortal existence, "all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7) as we accepted the great eternal plan of happiness. We happily anticipated coming to earth to have opportunities to grow spiritually. "Men are, that they might have

joy" (2 Nephi 2:25). The opportunity is here and now to obtain happiness that extends beyond our earth life; however, we need to know what it is and where to find it.

Happiness results from obedience

In the Book of Mormon, Lehi explained to his son Jacob that happiness is a result of obedience. He told Jacob that eternal laws have both punishments and opportunities for happiness attached to them. When we disobey God's laws, we suffer the punishments, but when we obey, we reap the happiness (see 2 Nephi 2:10). Part of what creates happiness is the absence of regret, guilt, and sin.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, "Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it;

Elder Richard G. Scott said, "Your joy in life depends upon your trust in Heavenly Father and His holy Son, your conviction that their plan of happiness truly can bring you joy" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 32; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 24).

Through the Savior we can find our way back to God. We can find peace and happiness in this life and eternal joy in the world to come. That thought, in and of itself, warms my heart and makes me smile.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

The book of Job poses the universal question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14). The question of resurrection from the dead is a central subject of scripture, ancient and modern. The resurrection is a pillar of our faith. It adds meaning to our doctrine, motivation to our behavior, and hope for our future.

The Resurrection of Jesus

The universal resurrection became a reality with the Resurrection of Jesus Christ (see Matthew 27:52-53). On the third day after His death and burial, Jesus came forth out of the tomb. He appeared to several men and women, and then to the assembled Apostles. Three of the Gospels describe this event. Luke is the most complete:

"Jesus . . . saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

"But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.

"And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?

"Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a

Radiate a glad heart

As we come to understand the great plan of happiness, we will radiate, for all the world to see, a glad heart and a cheerful countenance. We will show that we know the gospel of Jesus Christ is a simple, ever-present source of true happiness today and ever after in eternity. It is living the gospel of Jesus Christ that is our guarantee of living "happily ever after." Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. . . .

"Then opened he their understanding, . . .

"And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day" (Luke 24:36-39, 45-46).

The Savior gave the Apostles a second witness. Thomas, one of the Twelve, had not been with them when Jesus came. He insisted that he would not believe unless he could see and feel for himself. John records:

"And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.

"Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.

"And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

"Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:26-29).

Despite these biblical witnesses, many who call themselves Christians reject or confess serious doubts about the reality of the resurrection. As if to anticipate and counter such doubts, the Bible records many appearances of the risen Christ. In some of these He appeared to a single individual, such as to Mary Magdalene at the sepulchre. In others He appeared to large or small groups, such as when "he was seen of [about] five hundred brethren at once" (1 Corinthians 15:6).

The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ records the experience of hundreds who saw the risen Lord in person and touched Him, feeling the prints of the nails in His hands and feet and thrusting their hands into His side. The Savior invited a multitude to have this experience "one by one" (3 Nephi 11:15) so that they could know that He was "the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and [had] been slain for the sins of the world" (3 Nephi 11:14).

During the course of His personal ministry among these faithful people, the resurrected Christ healed the sick and also "took their little children, one by one, and blessed them" (3 Nephi 17:21). This tender episode was witnessed by about 2,500 men, women, and children (see 3 Nephi 17:25).

The resurrection of mortals

The possibility that a *mortal* who has died will be brought forth and live again in a resurrected body has awakened hope and stirred controversy through much of recorded history. Relying on clear scriptural teachings, Latter-day Saints join in affirming that Christ has "broken the bands of death" (Mosiah 16:7) and that "death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Corinthians 15:54; see also Mormon 7:5; Mosiah 15:8; 16:7-8; Alma 22:14). Because we believe the Bible and Book of Mormon descriptions of the literal Res-

urrection of Jesus Christ, we also readily accept the numerous scriptural teachings that a similar resurrection will come to all mortals who have ever lived upon this earth (see 1 Corinthians 15:22; 2 Nephi 9:22; Helaman 14:17; Mormon 9:13; D&C 29:26; 76:39, 42-44). As Jesus taught, "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19).

The literal and universal nature of the resurrection is vividly described in the Book of Mormon. The prophet Amulek taught:

"The death of Christ shall loose the bands of this temporal death, that all shall be raised from this temporal death.

"The spirit and the body shall be reunited again in its perfect form; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame, even as we now are at this time; . . .

"Now, this restoration shall come to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, both the wicked and the righteous; and even these shall not so much as a hair of their heads be lost; but every thing shall be restored to its perfect frame" (Alma 11:42-44).

Alma also taught that in the resurrection "all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame" (Alma 40:23).

Many living witnesses can testify to the literal fulfillment of these scriptural assurances of the resurrection. Many, including some in my own extended family, have seen a departed loved one in vision or personal appearance and have witnessed their restoration in "proper and perfect frame" in the prime of life. Whether these were manifestations of persons already resurrected or of righteous spirits awaiting an assured resurrection, the reality and nature of the resurrection of mortals is evident. What a comfort to know that all who have been disadvantaged in life from birth defects, from mortal injuries, from disease, or from the natural deterioration of old age

will be resurrected in "proper and perfect frame."

The significance of the resurrection

I wonder if we fully appreciate the enormous significance of our belief in a literal, universal resurrection. The assurance of immortality is fundamental to our faith. The Prophet Joseph Smith declared:

"The fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 121).

Of all things in that glorious ministry, why did the Prophet Joseph Smith use the testimony of the Savior's death, burial, and Resurrection as the fundamental principle of our religion, saying that "all other things . . . are only appendages to it"? The answer is found in the fact that the Savior's Resurrection is central to what the prophets have called "the great and eternal plan of deliverance from death" (2 Nephi 11:5).

In our eternal journey, the resurrection is the mighty milepost that signifies the end of mortality and the beginning of immortality. The Lord described the importance of this vital transition when He declared, "And thus did I, the Lord God, appoint unto man the days of his probation—that by his natural death he might be raised in immortality unto eternal life, even as many as would believe" (D&C 29:43). Similarly, the Book of Mormon teaches, "For as death hath passed upon all men, to fulfil the merciful plan of the great Creator, there must needs be a power of resurrection" (2 Nephi 9:6). We also know, from modern revelation, that without the reuniting of our spirits and our bodies in the resurrection we could

not receive a "fulness of joy" (D&C 93:33, 34).

When we understand the vital position of the resurrection in the "plan of redemption" that governs our eternal journey (Alma 12:25), we see why the Apostle Paul taught, "If there be no resurrection of the dead, . . . then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (1 Corinthians 15:13–14). We also see why the Apostle Peter referred to the fact that God the Father, in His abundant mercy, "hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3; see also 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18).

The resurrection changes our view of mortality

The "lively hope" we are given by the resurrection is our conviction that death is not the conclusion of our identity but merely a necessary step in the destined transition from mortality to immortality. This hope changes the whole perspective of mortal life. The assurance of resurrection and immortality affects how we look on the physical challenges of mortality, how we live our mortal lives, and how we relate to those around us.

The assurance of resurrection gives us the strength and perspective to endure the mortal challenges faced by each of us and by those we love, such things as the physical, mental, or emotional deficiencies we bring with us at birth or acquire during mortal life. Because of the resurrection, we know that these mortal deficiencies are only temporary!

The assurance of resurrection also gives us a powerful incentive to keep the commandments of God during our mortal lives. Resurrection is much more than merely reuniting a spirit to a body held captive by the grave. We know from the Book of Mormon that the resurrection is a *restoration* that brings back "carnal for carnal" and "good for that which is

good" (Alma 41:13; see also verses 2–4 and Helaman 14:31). The prophet Amulek taught, "That same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world" (Alma 34:34). As a result, when persons leave this life and go on to the next, "they who are righteous shall be righteous still" (2 Nephi 9:16), and "whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life . . . will rise with us in the resurrection" (D&C 130:18).

The principle of restoration also means that persons who are not righteous in mortal life will not rise up righteous in the resurrection (see 2 Nephi 9:16; 1 Corinthians 15:35–44; D&C 88:27–32). Moreover, unless our mortal sins have been cleansed and blotted out by repentance and forgiveness (see Alma 5:21; 2 Nephi 9:45–46; D&C 58:42), we will be resurrected with a "bright recollection" (Alma 11:43) and a "perfect knowledge of all our guilt, and our uncleanness" (2 Nephi 9:14; see also Alma 5:18). The seriousness of that reality is emphasized by the many scriptures suggesting that the resurrection is followed immediately by the Final Judgment (see 2 Nephi 9:15, 22; Mosiah 26:25; Alma 11:43–44; 42:23; Mormon 7:6; 9:13–14). Truly, "this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God" (Alma 34:32).

The assurance that the resurrection will include an opportunity to be with our family members—husband, wife, parents, brothers and sisters, children, and grandchildren—is a powerful encouragement for us to fulfill our family responsibilities in mortality. It helps us live together in love in this life in anticipation of joyful reunions and associations in the next.

Our sure knowledge of a resurrection to immortality also gives us the courage to face our own death—even a death that we might call premature. Thus, the people of Ammon in the Book of Mormon "never did look upon death with any de-

gree of terror, for their hope and views of Christ and the resurrection; therefore, death was swallowed up to them by the victory of Christ over it" (Alma 27:28).

The assurance of immortality also helps us bear the mortal separations involved in the death of our loved ones. Every one of us has wept at a death, grieved through a funeral, or stood in pain at a graveside. I am surely one who has. We should all praise God for the assured resurrection that makes our mortal separations temporary and gives us the hope and strength to carry on.

The resurrection and temples

We are living in a glorious season of temple building. This is also a consequence of our faith in the resurrection. Just a few months ago I was privileged to accompany President Hinckley to the dedication of a new temple. In that sacred setting I heard him say:

"Temples stand as a witness of our conviction of immortality. Our temples are concerned with life beyond the grave. For example, there is no need for marriage in the temple if we were only concerned with being married for the period of our mortal lives."

This prophetic teaching enlarged my understanding. Our temples are living, working testimonies to our faith in the reality of the resurrection. They provide the sacred settings where living proxies can perform all of the necessary ordinances of mortal life in behalf of those who live in the world of the spirits. None of this would be meaningful if we did not have the assurance of universal immortality and the opportunity for eternal life because of the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We believe in the literal, universal resurrection of all mankind because of "the resurrection of the Holy One of Israel" (2 Nephi 9:12). We also testify of "the Living Christ," as was said in the re-

cent apostolic declaration of that same name:

"We solemnly testify that His life, which is central to all human history, neither began in Bethlehem nor concluded on Calvary. . . .

"We bear testimony, as His duly ordained Apostles—that Jesus is the Living Christ, the immortal Son of God. He is the great King Immanuel, who stands today on the right hand of His Father. He is the light, the life, and the hope of the world. His way is the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come" ("The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles," *Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 2–3).

I testify of that reality and of the reality of His Resurrection and ours, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee."

President Hinckley

Sister Coleen K. Menlove, Primary general president, spoke to us, followed by Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The choir then sang "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee."

We are grateful to the Bonneville International LDS Radio Network and the owners and operators of the many other television and radio stations and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings of this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world. We also acknowledge the broadcast of these proceedings over the Internet by LDSWorld.com.

We thank the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning.

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following his remarks, the choir will sing "Come, O Thou King of Kings," and the benediction will then be offered by Elder Richard E. Turley Sr. of the Seventy. The conference will then be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

For your information, a video presentation entitled *Special Witnesses of Christ* will be shown over the Church satellite system immediately following this session of conference. This program will also be shown on Sunday over KSL and KBYU.

President James E. Faust

The Tabernacle and Conference Center

My beloved brothers and sisters, today is historic. This is the first general conference of this century and millennium, and the first to be held in this great new Conference Center of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I join with all of you in expressing admiration, respect, and appreciation for the vision of our great prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. His was the faith

and courage to move forward with this great project.

With a tear of sadness, we leave our beloved Tabernacle, the traditional site for general conference. As President Hinckley has said, "We have outgrown it." We pause to pay tribute to the faith, vision, and inspiration of Brigham Young and his associates who in faith built the Tabernacle, the construction of which is truly remarkable. I have been in the ceiling area of the Tabernacle, where the origi-

nal rawhide bindings are still wrapped around the timbers of the roof structure. Although the timbers have since been reinforced with steel, the creative handiwork of the faithful pioneer Saints still stands as a symbol of their great faith.

A marvelous but challenging future

I believe the future will be great and marvelous in many respects. Opportunities for education and learning have increased and will continue to increase dramatically. One person defined it this way: "Education is when you read the fine print. Experience is what you get if you don't."¹

Now and in the future, vast amounts of information are becoming more accessible worldwide through electronic devices in the home, the workplace, or the local library. However, great will be the challenges and endless the problems because with this wave of knowledge, life actually becomes more complicated. Brigham Young said, "It was revealed to me in the commencement of this Church, that the Church would spread, prosper, grow and extend, and that in proportion to the spread of the Gospel among the nations of the earth, so would the power of Satan rise."²

The shield of faith

As we move into a new era, we have only one safe course: to press forward in faith. Faith will be our strong shield to protect us from the fiery arrows of Satan. Values should not change with time because faith in Jesus Christ is indispensable to happiness and eternal salvation. The greatest century of advancement in science and technology has just ended. Yet a spirit of darkness prevails in our day as it did many centuries ago when Jesus Christ was about to be crucified. Even so, as the Prophet Joseph Smith said:

"Great blessings await us at this time, and will soon be poured out upon us, if we are faithful in all things, for we are even entitled to greater spiritual blessings than they were, because they had Christ in person with them, to instruct them in the great plan of salvation. His personal presence we have not, therefore we have need of greater faith."³

Faith is the first principle of the gospel of Jesus Christ as set forth by the Prophet Joseph: "We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost."⁴ This faith will be the sanctuary for our souls.

Cautions about scientific progress

Never before in the history of the world has the need for faith in God been greater. Although science and technology open up boundless opportunities, they also present great perils because Satan employs these marvelous discoveries to his great advantage. The communication highway that spans the globe is overloaded with information for which no one bears responsibility for its truth or its source. Crime has become much more sophisticated and life more perilous. In war, killing has become far more efficient. Great challenges lie ahead unless the power of faith, judgment, honesty, decency, self-control, and character increases proportionately to compensate for this expansion of secular knowledge. Without moral progress, stimulated by faith in God, immorality in all its forms will proliferate and strangle goodness and human decency. Mankind will not be able to fully express the potential nobility of the human soul unless faith in God is strengthened.

In our time the belief that science and technology can solve all of mankind's problems has become a theocracy. I would despair if I thought our eternal salvation depended on scientific, techni-

cal, or secular knowledge separate from righteousness and the word of God. The word of God as spoken by His prophets through the centuries justifies no other conclusion.

Many believe that the transcendent answers to life's questions lie in the test tube, in the laboratories, in the equations, and in the telescopes. This theocracy of science leaves out the ultimate answer to the overarching question, "Why?" Knowing cause and effect is fascinating but does not explain why we are here, where we came from, and where we are going. As Albert Einstein said, "I shall never believe that God plays dice with the world."⁵

President Harold B. Lee once said: "No matter what his progress in science, man must always be subject to the will and direction of Divine Providence. Man has never discovered anything that God has not already known."⁶

The First Vision unlocked the heavens

I do not believe that this great outpouring of knowledge happened by chance. All of this secular knowledge did not come solely from the creative minds of men and women. Mankind has been on the earth a long time. Over the centuries, knowledge came at a snail's pace.

I believe that the appearance of God the Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in 1820 to Joseph Smith unlocked the heavens not only to the great spiritual knowledge revealed in this dispensation but also to secular knowledge. "Anthropologists inform us that for thousands of years the average human being could expect to live about 25 to 30 years."⁷ But since the late 19th century, life expectancy worldwide has risen to 64 years.⁸ New ideas, including scientific inventions and discoveries of better ways of doing things, were being produced annually at 39 a year from 4,000 B.C. to A.D. 1, contrasted to 3,840 new ideas a year in the 19th century, while today they are created at the rate of 110,000 a year.⁹

Develop faith to resist secularism

Now comes the challenge to prevent the scientific, technical, and intellectual from stifling the spiritual enlightenment in our lives. As someone once said, "The greatest of undeveloped resources [in our country] is faith; the greatest of unused power is prayer."¹⁰ Technology may help us communicate with each other and the world, but not with God.

I wish to sound a voice of warning to this people. I solemnly declare that this spiritual kingdom of faith will move forward with or without each of us individually. No unhallowed hand can stay the growth of the Church or prevent fulfillment of its mission. Any of us can be left behind, drawn away by the seductive voices of secularism and materialism.

To sustain faith, each of us must be humble and compassionate, kind and generous to the poor and the needy. Faith is further sustained by daily doses of spirituality that come to us as we kneel in prayer. It begins with us as individuals and extends to our families, who need to be solidified in righteousness. Honesty, decency, integrity, and morality are all necessary ingredients of our faith and will provide sanctuary for our souls.

Faith enhances our gifts and abilities

Simple faith in God the Father; His Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost is like a supercharger operating in our lives. As Elder Charles W. Penrose said:

"Some people will not believe anything they cannot grasp with their human reason or cannot see with their natural eyes. But blessed is the man of faith, blessed is the woman of faith! For by faith they can see into things that cannot be discerned by the natural eyes. They can reach out to the regions of immortality, grasp eternal realities and lay hold upon the things of God!"¹¹ This is so because through faith, our natural gifts and

powers of achievement are increasingly enhanced.

Faith intensifies and magnifies our gifts and abilities. There is no greater source of knowledge than the inspiration that comes from the Godhead, who have all understanding and knowledge of that which has been, is now, and will be in the future.

Faith of Amanda Smith

At Haun's Mill, a heroic pioneer woman, Amanda Smith, learned by faith how to do something beyond her abilities and the scientific knowledge of her time. On that terrible day in 1838, as the firing ceased and the mobsters left, she returned to the mill and saw her eldest son, Willard, carrying his seven-year-old brother, Alma. She cried, "Oh! my Alma is dead!"

"No, mother," he said, "I think Alma is not dead. But father and brother Sardius are [dead!]" But there was no time for tears now. Alma's entire hipbone was shot away. Amanda later recalled:

"Flesh, hip bone, joint and all had been ploughed out. . . . We laid little Alma on a bed in our tent and I examined the wound. It was a ghastly sight. I knew not what to do. . . . Yet was I there, all that long, dreadful night, with my dead and my wounded, and none but God as our physician and help. 'Oh my Heavenly Father,' I cried, 'what shall I do? Thou seest my poor wounded boy and knowest my inexperience. Oh, Heavenly Father, direct me what to do!' And then I was directed as by a voice speaking to me.

" . . . Our fire was still smouldering. . . . I was directed to take . . . ashes and make a lye and put a cloth saturated with it right into the wound. . . . Again and again I saturated the cloth and put it into the hole . . . , and each time mashed flesh and splinters of bone came away with the cloth; and the wound became as white as chicken's flesh.

"Having done as directed I again prayed to the Lord and was again instructed as distinctly as though a physician had been standing by speaking to me. Near by was a slippery-elm tree. From this I was told to make a . . . poultice and fill the wound with it. . . . The poultice was made, and the wound, which took fully a quarter of a yard of linen to cover, . . . was properly dressed. . . .

"I removed the wounded boy to a house . . . and dressed his hip; the Lord directing me as before. I was reminded that in my husband's trunk there was a bottle of balsam. This I poured into the wound, greatly soothing Alma's pain.

" 'Alma my child,' I said, 'you believe that the Lord made your hip?'

" 'Yes, mother.'

" 'Well, the Lord can make something there in the place of your hip, don't you believe he can, Alma?'

" 'Do you think that the Lord can, mother?' inquired the child, in his simplicity.

" 'Yes, my son,' I replied, 'he has showed it all to me in a vision.'

"Then I laid him comfortably on his face, and said: 'Now you lay like that, and don't move, and the Lord will make you another hip.'

"So Alma laid on his face for five weeks, until he was entirely recovered—a flexible gristle having grown in place of the missing joint and socket, which remains to this day a marvel to physicians. . . .

"It is now nearly forty years ago, but Alma has never been the least crippled during his life, and he has traveled quite a long period of the time as a missionary of the gospel and [is] a living miracle of the power of God."¹²

Strengthen faith by exercising it

The treatment was unusual for that day and time, and unheard of now, but when we reach an extremity, like Sister Smith, we have to exercise our simple

faith and listen to the Spirit as she did. Exercising our faith will make it stronger. As Alma taught:

"If ye will . . . exercise a particle of faith, . . . let this desire work in you even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words.

"Now . . . it must needs be . . . that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge [your] soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten [your] understanding. . . .

"Now behold, would not this increase your faith?"¹³

Righteousness is a companion to faith. Strong faith is earned by keeping the commandments. This helps us, as Paul said, to "put on the whole armour of God."¹⁴

Eternal truths are the foundation of faith

There are for this people some absolutes upon which our faith must rest. They are basic, eternal truths. They are that:

1. Jesus, the Son of the Father, is the Christ and the Savior and Redeemer of the world.

2. Joseph Smith was the instrument through which the gospel was restored in its fulness and completeness in our time.

3. The Book of Mormon is the word of God and, as the Prophet Joseph Smith said, is the keystone of our religion and is another testament of Jesus as the Christ and the Redeemer of all mankind.

4. Gordon B. Hinckley holds, as all of the preceding Presidents of the Church did, all of the keys and authority restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

This is the work of God. I believe and testify that, as Paul said, if we can "come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God,"¹⁵ we can go forward with great hope and confidence into the future. We will be given

strength to overcome all adversity. We will rejoice in our blessings and find peace in our souls. That we may do so I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Pete Seeger.
2. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 72.
3. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 90.
4. Articles of Faith 1:1.
5. In John Bartlett, comp., *Familiar Quotations*, 14th ed. (1968), 950.
6. *Be Ye Not Deceived*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year (4 May 1965), 6.
7. Stephen Moore, "Great American Century Is Just Beginning," *Arizona Republic*, 9 Jan. 2000.
8. *New York Times 2000 Almanac* (1999), 484.
9. See Charles I. Jones, "Was an Industrial Revolution Inevitable? Economic Growth over the Very Long Run," working paper 7375, National Bureau of Economic Research, Cambridge, Mass., Oct. 1999, 32.
10. Roger W. Babson, *Religion and Business* (1921), 80.
11. *Deseret News Semi-Weekly*, 14 Sept. 1880, 1.
12. "Amanda Smith," in Andrew Jenson, comp., *Historical Record*, 9 vols. (1882–90), 5:84–86; paragraphing and punctuation altered.
13. Alma 32:27–29.
14. Ephesians 6:11.
15. Ephesians 4:13.

The choir sang "Come, O Thou King of Kings."

Elder Richard E. Turley Sr. offered the benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 170th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center on Saturday, April 1, 2000, at 2:00 P.M. President James E. Faust conducted this session.

Music was provided by a combined choir from Brigham Young University. Ronald J. Staheli and Rosalind Hall directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

President Faust made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President James E. Faust

My beloved brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this second general session of the 170th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, radio, or the Internet, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by a combined choir from Brigham Young University, under the direction of Ronald J. Staheli and Rosalind Hall, with Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Ernan A. Call of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah."

Elder Ernan A. Call offered the invocation.

President Faust

The choir will now sing "Behold the Wounds in Jesus' Hands." President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will then present the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

Brother Ted E. Davis, chairman of the Church Audit Committee, will then read the Report of the Church Audit Committee. He will be followed by Brother F. Michael Watson, secretary to the First Presidency, who will present the statistical report of the Church for the year 1999.

The choir sang "Behold the Wounds in Jesus' Hands."

Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

President Thomas S. Monson

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I, Brother Monson, now present to you the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Coun-

selor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may also manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. Those in favor, please manifest it. Opposed, if any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

Those who can now join with us in extending a vote of appreciation to Elders Douglas L. Callister, Donald L. Hallstrom, Cleto P. de Oliveria, and Octaviano Tenorio for their service as Area Authority Seventies, please manifest it. Thank you.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Lance B. Wickman, Lynn G. Robbins, Donald L. Hallstrom, and Ronald A. Rasband as new members of the First Quorum of the Seventy. All in favor, please manifest it. Opposed, if any.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as new members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy: Douglas L. Callister, Darwin B. Christenson, Keith Crockett, H. Aldridge Gillespie, and

Robert C. Oaks. Those in favor, please signify. Opposed, if any, may also signify.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as Area Authority Seventies: Jorge O. Abad, Marcos A. Aidukaitis, José C. Aleson, Gutenberg G. Amorim, José E. Boza, Edison M. Cabrito, Tad R. Callister, Marco A. Cardenas, Yatyr M. César, Flávio A. Cooper, Robert M. Cowan, Reynaldo L. Cuyong, Fred C. Dimaya, Rowland E. Elvidge, Jaime Ferreira, Roberto García, D. Rex Gerratt, José L. Gonzalez, James J. Hamula, Ralph W. Hardy Jr., Joseph T. Hicken, Merrill F. Higham, Michael L. Jensen, Glen O. Jensen, Spencer V. Jones, Ronald L. Loveland, Hans H. Mattsson, James B. McDonald, Ross H. McEachran, A. Roger Merrill, Haruyoshi Nakamura, Alfonso L. Ramos, Dale G. Renlund, Carlos C. Revillo Sr., Lindon J. Robison, J. Mitchel Scott, Jean A. Tefan, Guillermo Torres, and Roland N. Walker. All in favor, please manifest it. Thank you. Any opposed, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Opposed, if any, by the same sign.

It appears, President Hinckley, that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your faith and your prayers.

We shall now ask the newly called members of the First and Second Quorums of the Seventy to take their places on the stand as directed by the ushers. Thank you.

Church Audit Committee Report for 1999

Ted E. Davis

The Church Audit Committee consists of three members who are indepen-

dent of all Church officers, employees, departments, and Church-affiliated organizations. We report directly to the First Presidency and have access to Church

records and personnel necessary to perform our responsibilities.

The Church Auditing Department is separate and independent from the Church Audit Committee. This department performs internal audits of worldwide Church operations and audits the various financial statements of the Church in accordance with recognized professional auditing standards. It also monitors contributions and expenditures of local ecclesiastical units.

The Church Audit Committee has reviewed the controls over contributions and expenditures of Church funds that safeguard assets of the Church. We have also reviewed budgeting, accounting and reporting, and auditing systems for the year ended December 31, 1999.

Expenditures of Church funds for 1999 were authorized by the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes according to written policies. This Council is composed of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric, as prescribed under revelation. Administration of approved budgets is controlled through the Budget Department under direction of the Appropriation and Budget Committees.

Based on our review of financial, budgeting, and other controls and our review of Church audit reports for 1999 and responses thereto, the Church Audit Committee is of the opinion that, in all material respects, Church contributions received and expended during the year ended December 31, 1999, have been managed in accordance with revelation and established Church policies and procedures.

Church-affiliated organizations, including Deseret Trust Company and Deseret Management Corporation and its subsidiaries, are operated separately from the Church. The financial activities of these affiliated organizations were not reviewed by the Church Audit Committee in 1999. However, we have verified that these organizations, as well as Brigham Young University and other institutions of higher education, are being audited annually by independent public accounting firms.

Respectfully submitted,

Church Audit Committee
Ted E. Davis, Chairman
Donald D. Salmon
Frank M. McCord

Church Statistical Report for 1999

F. Michael Watson

Brothers and sisters, at the direction of the First Presidency, the following statistical report represents the membership growth and status of the Church for the year ending December 31, 1999. This information is based on reports that were received prior to general conference.

Church units

Stakes	2,542
Districts	636
Missions	333
Wards and branches	25,793

Church membership

Total membership	10,752,986
Increase in children of record during 1999	84,118
Converts baptized during 1999	306,171

Missionaries

Full-time missionaries	58,593
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Temples

Temples dedicated during 1999	15
Temples in operation	68

Ground was broken and construction began on 30 new temples during 1999; 17 additional temples were announced and are awaiting construction.

Prominent members who have passed away since last April

Elder Carlos E. Asay, an emeritus General Authority; Sister Virginia Pickett

Backman, wife of Elder Robert L. Backman, an emeritus General Authority

President Faust

Our first speaker in this session will be Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder L. Tom Perry

To Brother Ted E. Davis, Donald D. Salmon, Frank M. McCord: as a member of the Church I'd just like to personally thank you for the untold hours, days, and years you have spent in assuring me that everything in the Church, accounting-wise, is in proper order. It's deeply appreciated, I'm sure, by nearly 11 million other members of the Church. Thank you so much.

Use of technology to spread the gospel

Over the last couple of years, we have watched with great anticipation the construction of this beautiful Conference Center. Now we find ourselves enjoying this historic general conference with many more thousands present to hear the words of the prophets. This is surely the beginning of a new era in Church history—an era of broader, more profound reach and influence, an era of greater growth and impact.

Before the final meeting of the First Presidency and the Twelve last year, President Hinckley, sensing the forthcoming changes about to occur, proposed that we come to the temple fasting and conclude our year, the century, and a millennium with a fast and testimony meeting. So not to detract from the spirit of testimony, he requested that we dispense with any business items at this special meeting and save them for the new year.

The meeting was a spiritual feast, filled with the witness and testimony of our Lord and Savior. After partaking of the sacrament, each member of the Twelve stood and bore his witness to the mission of Jesus the Christ, the Savior of the world. The concluding three testimonies were given by members of the First Presidency, the final witness being given by President Hinckley. It was a sobering yet joyous occasion as we strengthened each other with strong testimonies.

President Hinckley added to his powerful, emotional witness a list of concerns for the future. One of his concerns particularly stuck in my mind. His worry was that with the great growth of the Church throughout the world, it would become increasingly difficult for the Apostles to reach all the members of the Church and personally admonish them to live the gospel. Thus, the future would bring greater reliance on technology to carry the gospel message to the worldwide Church.

As we review the sacred history contained in the holy scriptures, we find similar events when a prophet of God sees significant changes in the horizons ahead. It is interesting that when such critical events occur, great and inspired attention and detail are given both to the prophetic message *and* the way it is delivered—that

is, the technology that's used to carry the gospel message.

King Benjamin instructs his sons

I am reminded of the great sermon King Benjamin delivered to his people, which is found in the first chapters of the book of Mosiah. This righteous king had served his people long and faithfully. It was time to turn the leadership over to his son. But before doing so, he wanted to leave his witness and testimony of his Lord and Savior to his people. He wanted first to instruct his sons "that . . . they might become men of understanding; and that they might know concerning the prophecies which had been spoken by the mouths of their fathers, which were delivered them by the hand of the Lord.

" . . . He also taught them concerning the records which were engraven on the plates of brass, saying: My sons, I would that ye should remember that were it not for these plates, which contain these records and these commandments, we must have suffered in ignorance, even at this present time, not knowing the mysteries of God" (Mosiah 1:2-3).

Keeping the doctrine pure was foremost in King Benjamin's mind, so he wanted all of his people to receive his witness and his word. He instructed that Mosiah, his son and successor, be brought before him, and to him he gave specific instructions concerning the gathering of his people for this, his final conference. He said:

"My son, I would that ye should make a proclamation throughout all this land among all this people, or the people of Zarahemla, and the people of Mosiah who dwell in the land, that thereby they may be gathered together; for on the morrow I shall proclaim unto this my people out of mine own mouth that thou art a king and a ruler over this people, whom the Lord our God hath given us.

"And moreover, I shall give this people a name, that thereby they may be distinguished above all the people which the Lord God hath brought out of the land of Jerusalem; and this I do because they have been a diligent people in keeping the commandments of the Lord" (Mosiah 1:10-11).

King Benjamin teaches his people

Then Mosiah went forth and proclaimed to the people that they should gather themselves and go up to the temple, where they might hear the words of his father. And the people gathered together, and "they pitched their tents round about, every man according to his family, consisting of his wife, and his sons, and his daughters, and their sons, and their daughters, from the eldest down to the youngest, every family being separate one from another" (Mosiah 2:5). They pitched their tents with their doors toward the temple so that they might hear the words of King Benjamin as he instructed them in the doctrine of eternal life. Because of the numbers of people that were there gathered within and without the walls of the temple, the king had a tower erected so they could hear his words. But he realized that even with the tower not all would be able to hear, so he caused that his words should be written and sent forth among the families who were not within the sound of his voice, that all might receive his words. (See Mosiah 2:6-8.)

From this tower he told his people to open their ears and listen to his testimony of the Savior. After prophesying and bearing testimony, he counseled them about how to return to their Heavenly Father:

"And moreover, I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and

spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness. O remember, remember that these things are true; for the Lord God hath spoken it" (Mosiah 2:41).

Finally, to ensure that the people understood his words and kept their covenants with God to keep His commandments, King Benjamin "appointed priests to teach the people, that thereby they might hear and know the commandments of God, and to stir them up in remembrance of the oath which they had made" (Mosiah 6:3). In many ways, King Benjamin used all the technologies available to him in his day to gather his people, spread the good word of God, and reinforce the word.

President Grant's use of new technology

In another era we find another prophet using new media to have his message reach the hearts of the people. There was a special conference held at the time the Church reached its 100th birthday. We find this record from the 100th annual conference, held in the Tabernacle on Sunday, April 6, 1930:

"In accordance with instructions previously issued by the First Presidency of the Church, the following program was carried out in all the wards and branches of the Church, commencing at 10:00 A.M., Sunday, April 6th, except . . . where arrangements had been made for the people to assemble in their local chapels and listen, by means of radio equipment, to the services as they were broadcast from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City. . . .

" . . . The [Tabernacle] was crowded to capacity, every seat being taken, and the aisles and doorways and every other available space occupied" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1930, 2).

President Heber J. Grant, presiding at this broadcast session of the general conference, began:

"My heart is full of gratitude beyond my power to express as I look upon this wonderful audience of the priesthood of the living God, together with officers of our organizations, assembled here in conference in commemoration of the one hundredth anniversary of the organization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

"I am about to read to you an address by the First Presidency of the Church, copies of which have been sent to all wards, stakes and missions in all countries where we have organizations of the Church. At this hour all over the world this message will be read to our people" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1930, 3).

Like King Benjamin, President Grant began by bearing his testimony of God the Father and of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then he went on to emphasize some of the great scientific knowledge, inventions, and industrial developments that have harnessed the forces of the universe and been adapted for the comfort and convenience of men. He stated:

"Undoubtedly the greatest miracle of the century is the accomplishment by which the human voice, with the personality of the speaker, may be indefinitely preserved and reproduced with every detail of originality. . . .

"Contemplating these accomplishments of the past century, to which but brief reference has been made, we are led to exclaim:

"Great and marvelous are thy ways, O Lord.

"From eternity to eternity Thou art the same!

"Thy purposes fail not, neither are there any who can stay Thy hand!" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1930, 5).

Use of modern technology today

Now, on this day, April 1, in the year 2000, we are gathered in this beautiful new Conference Center, which has been built so many more thousands can see the

prophet and hear his voice. But even with this building and the increased ability to travel among the Saints to meet them in so many other lands, smaller numbers will be able to enjoy that personal contact with the prophets and apostles because of the growth of the Church. Technology has blessed us with many innovations to spread the message of the gospel through satellite systems; our own network web site, television, and radio; as well as the written text in our magazines and newspaper. All of these add to our delivery systems, which greatly increase our ability to receive the messages that are delivered.

Internalize messages of the gospel

But the bricks and mortar and the continued expansion of technology will only bring the messages to us. One challenge remains the same from the time of King Benjamin to the time of President Grant to today—that is, the challenge of each individual and family, through personal and collective study, to internalize the messages of the gospel of our Lord and Savior. Salvation is not in facilities or technology, but in the word. Only in the power of the word will it impact our lives and help us to live closer to our Father in Heaven.

Remember the words of the Lord when He first instructed the Saints in His

newly restored Church on April 6, 1830. He declared:

“Behold, there shall be a record kept among you; and in it thou shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church through the will of God the Father, and the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ. . . .

“Wherefore, meaning the church, thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me;

“For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith” (D&C 21:1, 4–5).

It is wonderful to be in this beautiful new facility and to have new technology which carries conference sessions throughout the world. But it is the message we receive which, if we study and practice, will bring us the light of the gospel as further preparation in our great quest for eternal life.

This is my humble testimony to you, and I do it in the name of our Savior, even Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

We will now be pleased to hear from Elders Glenn L. Pace and Jay E. Jensen of the Seventy.

Elder Glenn L. Pace

Life enriched by the temple

Several years ago I attended a BYU football game with some of our young children. We lost the game. I really hate it when that happens. We listened to the coaches' show on the ride back to our home in Bountiful. When it was over, my children had no alternative but to listen

to my own postgame show. Just as I had completed my final analysis of what went wrong in the game, my seven-year-old daughter asked, “Dad, when you see the temple, do you get a good feeling inside?” I wondered, “Where in the world did that come from?” As I was trying to figure out what that comment had to do with the football game, I glanced over at

her and could see she was looking out the window at the Salt Lake Temple. For some reason the game no longer mattered.

My whole life has been enriched by experiences of the temple. Our parents would take us to Temple Square in Salt Lake City on a regular basis. They would point to the temple and tell us that they were married there and because of that we would always be together as a family. What comfort that brought to a little boy whose biggest fear was that his parents might die. Now what comfort it brings to a grown man whose parents have passed on to the other side.

When I was 10 years old, in the shadows of the Salt Lake Temple I first read the Joseph Smith story and received a powerful testimony of the truthfulness of the Restoration.

I remember with thanksgiving going to the temple with my parents and receiving my endowment prior to departing for my mission.

My wife and I were married in the Salt Lake Temple about three years later. In subsequent years I have had the honor of performing the temple marriages of each of our six children.

Temple building is a modern miracle

We know many members of the Church have not had the luxury I have had of growing up around temples. Because of this knowledge we were all thrilled with the announcement made by President Hinckley in October of 1997 when he said, "We are determined . . . to take the temples to the people and afford them every opportunity for the very precious blessings that come of temple worship" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1997, 69; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 50).

Since that time we have rejoiced and marveled as we have heard announcements of numerous temples and subsequently read of their open houses and dedications. We are witnessing a modern-

day miracle and fulfillment of prophecy. What a wonderful time to be alive!

The adversary's opposition to temples

Our excitement over the building of temples is not shared by all. The adversary in particular is having a major temper tantrum as he sees his power threatened.

Over the last two years I have witnessed his wrath firsthand in West Africa. He has been very active, trying to prevent the building of a temple in that part of the world. Two years ago President Hinckley announced that there would be a temple in West Africa located in Accra, Ghana. Since then the adversary has been relentless in trying to prevent that from happening. Why is Lucifer so concerned?

We have 85,000 members in West Africa, and the Church is growing very rapidly. Sacrament meeting attendance is over 50 percent, but currently only 400 members have been endowed because of the prohibitive expense of traveling thousands of miles to Johannesburg or London. We have over 700 full-time African missionaries serving in the mission field, and very few of them have been endowed.

The African people have waited for centuries to receive the fulness of the gospel and have been through much pain and suffering. Now, at last, they can receive every blessing available to God's children. Worthy members can receive the temple endowment and be able to have their families sealed together for time and for all eternity.

Faithfulness to temple covenants brings an acceleration of spiritual progress. Elder John A. Widtsoe explained, "They will attain more readily to their place in the presence of the Lord; they will increase more rapidly in every divine power; they will approach more nearly to the likeness of God; they will more completely realize their divine destiny" (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, arr. G. Homer Durham, 3 vols. in 1 [1960], 300).

That is why Lucifer is so concerned. In addition, he is aware of the large number of Africans who have accepted the gospel on the other side of the veil and are anxiously awaiting their proxy baptism and temple endowment, as well as being sealed to their families. When a temple is dedicated, the dam in the spirit world will break and there will be a flood of humanity who have lived on the African continent flow into the temple of the Lord as their descendants do their work for them. We should not be surprised that Lucifer is using every means at his disposal to keep a temple from these people.

A temple in West Africa

Through centuries of suffering, the people in general have not become bitter. They are humble, teachable, and God-fearing. They know the scriptures, and they recognize the Shepherd's voice.

I have faith in their faith. I know the Savior loves the African people. Therefore, to paraphrase verse 33 of the 121st section of the Doctrine and Covenants, "As well might man stretch forth his puny arm to stop the [Congo] river in its decreed course, or to turn it up stream, as to hinder the Almighty from [building a temple for the African Latter-day Saints]."

As the Savior has said, "I will not suffer that [the enemy] shall destroy my work; yea, I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil" (D&C 10:43).

It has been inspiring to see the Lord's hand in bringing the forces together

which will lead to an inevitable victory. There will be a temple in West Africa.

Don't take temple blessings for granted

Last week we were driving from Provo to Bountiful again. As we left Provo, we could see the temple up on the hill. Before it was out of sight, the Mount Timpanogos Utah Temple came into view, and then the Jordan River Utah Temple appeared, followed by the Salt Lake Temple. And immediately thereafter we could see the Bountiful Utah Temple standing like a jewel above that city.

I thought back to my daughter's question, "Dad, when you see the temple, do you get a good feeling inside?" I realized the overwhelming answer is, "Yes, when I see a temple I have a wonderful feeling inside." However, my heart aches for our African brothers and sisters who have never seen a temple in their whole life.

It is my hope and prayer that we will never take temple blessings for granted. I also have a prayer in my heart for West Africa and any other place in the world where outside influences are preventing the Saints from enjoying the blessings of a temple.

I testify to the divinity of this work. Jesus is the Christ. He stands at the head of this Church, and He is orchestrating the building of His kingdom here on earth. We are witnessing miracles, and therefore I can testify that they have not ceased. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Jay E. Jensen

Words cannot describe the feelings of inadequacy associated with this holy calling, especially the responsibility to be

an especial witness of Jesus Christ in all the world (see D&C 107:25). I seek an interest in your faith and prayers.

Keep an eternal perspective

A truth about which I want to speak comes from Alma: "Therefore God gave unto them commandments, after having made known unto them the plan of redemption" (Alma 12:32).

The sequence in the teaching process from this verse is that our Heavenly Father first taught Adam and Eve the plan of redemption; then He gave them commandments. All commandments have their eternal importance in the context of the great plan of happiness (see Alma 42:8; 34:9).

I know that this truth is a key to conversion, retention, and activation. If we can help people first understand the plan, they will find a deeper and more permanent motivation to keep the commandments.

Another way of saying what Alma taught came from an experience one of the General Authorities shared. He related how he spoke with a sister he knows who years earlier went through a divorce. She approached him to thank him for the counsel he gave her during her darkest hours. She reminded him what he had told her: "Now sister, don't lose your eternal perspective. Always keep an eternal perspective." She said that truth became her pillar of strength.

When we understand the great plan of happiness, we are gaining an eternal perspective, and the commandments, ordinances, and covenants, and the experiences, trials, and tribulations can be seen in their true and eternal light.

Efforts to dim our eternal perspective

Remember, however, that Satan will dim the brightness of hope and eternal perspective by the dark, compelling urgency of now. Such is the case with those mentioned in the Book of Mormon who "turned out of the way" (Helaman 6:31) and "became for themselves" (3 Nephi 1:29).

Laman and Lemuel turned out of the way and complained of their sufferings because they did not have their possessions, with which they said they "might have been happy" (1 Nephi 17:21). It was so with the prodigal son. With the urgency to receive his mortal inheritance, he said to his father, "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me," which he took and "wasted his substance with riotous living" (Luke 15:12-13).

Still others are described by Nephi, who said that the devil will "stir them up to anger against that which is good . . . and lull them away into carnal security" (2 Nephi 28:20-21).

Overcoming a mortal perspective

Those without an eternal perspective, or those who lose sight of it, make their own standards to benefit themselves and their own selfish interests. Their mortal perspective becomes their standard and for some their god.

Ammon taught King Lamoni, who had always lived by the light of his mortality, about God, a divine power higher than the king. The king "supposed that whatsoever [he] did was right" (Alma 18:5). But Ammon's example and message touched his heart, and he "began to fear exceedingly, with fear lest he had done wrong" (Alma 18:5). Ammon then "expounded unto them the plan of redemption" (Alma 18:39).

After the prodigal son had lost all, "he came to himself, [and] he said, . . . I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee" (Luke 15:17-18). It is significant that he acknowledged his sin against heaven, for there really is a heaven and a merciful and a just God who reigns there. He revealed a divine plan that includes the Final Judgment by His Son, who "employeth no servant there," and where we will all stand someday (2 Nephi 9:41).

How to gain an eternal perspective

I am eternally thankful for wonderful parents and home-centered gospel learning where I first obtained an eternal perspective. That perspective was reinforced through my youth by leaders and teachers as I attended Church and seminary.

The most significant decision I made in my life to gain an eternal perspective and a firm understanding of the great plan of happiness was a full-time mission. By daily study of the Book of Mormon and as I taught the missionary discussions, I experienced the truth the Apostle Paul taught: "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" (Romans 2:21). I learned the plan of happiness by teaching it again and again.

Importance of hymns in conversion

While prayer, scripture study, and service in the Church helped me to learn the Father's plan and gain and develop an eternal perspective, I have an increased appreciation for the contribution that sacred hymns bring to conversion.

During my childhood and youth and especially in Primary, the hymns of the Restoration, written by true servants of God, played a profound role in my conversion to the gospel and an understanding of His plan. President Packer has said, "If we will listen, they are teaching the gospel, for the hymns of the Restoration are, in fact, a course in doctrine!" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1991, 29; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 22).

In the First Presidency preface of the current hymnal, we are reminded that "inspirational music is an essential part of our church meetings. . . . Some of the greatest sermons are preached by the singing of hymns. Hymns move us to repentance and good works, build tes-

timony and faith, comfort the weary, console the mourning, and inspire us to endure to the end" (*Hymns*, ix).

Many hymns reveal the doctrines of the great plan of redemption. Some hymns came as a result of great sacrifice, the ultimate being death, and they communicate a spirit of holiness and consecration to lead us to conversion to the Father and His plan.

With the teacher improvement emphasis this year, parents, teachers, and missionaries will improve gospel teaching by ensuring they understand the plan themselves and sing the hymns that carry the same spirit. Sing them—hopefully not in a perfunctory way, rather with purpose—to begin and end meetings and as part of lessons or to introduce or summarize ideas in the lessons.

I conclude with the words from this beautiful hymn:

I know my Father lives
And loves me too.
The Spirit whispers this to me . . .
And tells me it is true.

He sent me here to earth,
By faith to live his plan.
The Spirit whispers this to me . . .
And tells me that I can.
["I Know My Father Lives," *Hymns*, no. 302]

I testify that the great plan of the Eternal God is true. God lives. Jesus is His Divine Son. Joseph Smith is a true prophet, and this work is directed by the Lord through 15 prophets, seers, and revelators. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

Elders Glenn L. Pace and Jay E. Jensen of the Seventy have just spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now sing "Now Let Us Rejoice." Following

the singing, Elder Gary J. Coleman of the Seventy will address us. He will then be followed by Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir and congregation sang
 "Now Let Us Rejoice."

Elder Gary J. Coleman

Gratitude for Heavenly Father's plan

Now let us rejoice that we are here in a worship setting with living prophets, who now walk the earth and see beyond the seen, hear heaven-inspired words above the din of the day, and know our God.

There is a divine plan. It is called the plan of our Heavenly Father.¹

We believe in God. We know that He lives and we can have faith in Him. The scriptures testify that we are the children of God, His literal spirit offspring.² We lived with Him before we came to this earth. We are created in His image, and He is our Heavenly Father. Therefore, we are all brothers and sisters.

Because our Heavenly Father loves us, He has prepared a plan for us as we live here in mortality. Before joining this Church, I remember my first experiences associated with this wonderful plan as I began to learn of the restored gospel. I became acquainted with latter-day scripture that teaches the importance of our premortal training in the spirit world and indicates that we received many lessons there to prepare us for our time here on earth.³ I have learned from the scriptures and the living prophets that this life is the time to prepare ourselves to meet God and one day enjoy eternal life with Him.⁴ The prophet Jacob exclaimed while referring to this eternal plan, "O how great the plan of our God!"⁵ I know that God lives and wants to help us return to live with Him.

The great plan of God provided a Savior for us. All accountable persons sin and must pass through the experience of

death at the end of our mortality. Therefore, God sent Jesus Christ to fulfill the plan by helping us overcome sin and death. Jesus is our Savior and Redeemer. Through His atoning sacrifice for each of us, He helps us overcome sin through repentance and baptism. Through His Resurrection, He makes it possible for everyone to overcome death and the grave. We have faith to follow Jesus and become more like Him. Oh, how we love our Friend, the Lord Jesus Christ, the only "name . . . under heaven . . . whereby [we] can be saved."⁶ I know that Jesus saves us from the effects of sin and death.

We thank God for revealing His plan and the mission of Jesus through His chosen witnesses, the prophets and apostles. God gives these witnesses authority to act for Him. Their testimonies of the truths of the gospel are written in sacred books called scriptures. When people hear and read these teachings of the prophets, they can know they are true by the power of the Holy Ghost.

"Are you still here?"

Nearly 28 years ago I desired to attend a general conference of the Church and drove 14 hours to be in Salt Lake City for the conference. I entered Temple Square at 8:00 A.M., where the line outside door number 10 was all the way across Temple Square and halfway down the south side of the Assembly Hall. I was nearly 300 feet from my goal. The usher called out that the Tabernacle was full. People dropped out of line, and I inched forward.

At five minutes before 10:00 I was the only person standing in front of my chosen door. The door opened, and the usher asked, "Are you still here?" He closed the door, and my heart sank. As the choir began to sing the opening hymn at 10:00 sharp, the door opened one more time, and the usher beckoned me inside. He placed me on half a seat and behind a post, but a welcome seat it was! I was able to sustain the Lord's chosen leaders and hear their counsel that special day, just as we have done here this afternoon.

God's pattern for revealing truth

In our day, or the latter days, God has continued His pattern for revealing truth. He chose a young man named Joseph Smith to learn about the eternal plan of salvation. Joseph was confused about the different religions in his community, but the scriptures led him to ask God what he should do.⁷ In answer to his prayer, God the Father and Jesus Christ appeared to him.⁸ Through this and other experiences, Joseph Smith was called as a prophet, like unto Moses and other biblical prophets.⁹ Because Joseph saw and talked with the Savior, his work was to restore the truth about the great plan of God and the divine mission of our Lord. I know that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God.

The Prophet Joseph received authority to teach the gospel and bring forth additional scripture. He was commanded to translate writings of ancient prophets from the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ. The Book of Mormon prophets also knew about the plan of salvation and the sacred mission of Jesus Christ. The appearance of the resurrected Christ to the ancient people of the Americas is recorded in this sacred book.¹⁰ He taught them His gospel and established His Church among them. I know that the Book of Mormon is another testament of the divinity of Jesus Christ.

God has promised that the Holy Ghost will testify to each of us that sacred truths have been restored and that Joseph Smith was called by God to be a special witness of Christ and His gospel. We may come to know the truth of all things God has revealed, through the power of the Holy Ghost.¹¹

Conversion experiences

Millions of converts to this Church initially accepted the truths proclaimed by our missionaries in the first discussion. They then opened their hearts to all the discussions taught by the missionaries. They were invited to be baptized, confirmed, become "fellowcitizens with the saints,"¹² and continue on the gospel path to additional sacred covenants made in the temple.

A young couple with four children who were neighbors to a Latter-day Saint family accepted invitations to share activities and gospel-centered experiences. After the first missionary discussion, the father asked his LDS friend next door, "Would it be possible for you to baptize us on New Year's Eve? We would like to start the new year off right."

A young adult was seen near an institute of religion building, and he was asked if he had LDS friends. He responded, "Yes, and they are all on missions for the Mormon Church!" He was invited to be taught the gospel. He joined the Church. And one year later he was serving his own mission for the Lord.

A wonderful mother and wife in a beautiful nonmember family was asked if her spouse and children would be together for the eternities. Her answer was, "Yes, we will, won't we?" A few weeks later the mother, her husband, and the two oldest children were baptized because the answers to life's questions are found in this, the true Church of Jesus Christ.

A nonmember father whose son was serving a mission was asked, "Will you

be baptized on Father's Day?" He was baptized, with four former bishops of his family in attendance.

It is the power of the Spirit that convinces the investigator to pray about our message, to attend church, read the Book of Mormon, schedule further discussions, be baptized into the Lord's Church, and continue to be "nourished by the good word of God."¹³ We invite all people to come unto Christ through the door of faith, repentance, baptism, and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost. This is the door to eternal life. The Holy Ghost will help all of us stay on the path to God's presence.

The Lord opens doors to teach the gospel

Promptings from the Holy Ghost will also guide us to others who seek the true gospel. The Lord has said, "I will be with you; and in whatsoever place ye shall proclaim my name an effectual door shall be opened unto you, that they may receive my word."¹⁴

A few years ago I drove to Temple Square in Salt Lake City to meet an acquaintance of the missionaries. Their guest did not keep the appointment. My response to the missionaries was, "The Lord will provide someone for us to teach." In less than two to three minutes, two adult men walked through the front door of the North Visitors' Center and directly up to us. They spoke Spanish, and we did not! We assured them the best we could that someone would be able to help them. In moments, the only Spanish-speaking sister missionaries in the entire mission arrived at the visitors' center because they felt impressed to come there that morning!

Over a period of several weeks the missionary discussions were taught to those men, and they asked to be baptized. The Lord was true to His word. "An effectual door" was opened in the very moment it was needed for this beautiful experience.

We invite all who have been baptized and perhaps drifted away from the Lord to come back and renew your covenants with Him. With Jesus we say to all Israel, "Come home."¹⁵ Come home to the truths and ordinances of eternal life.

Testimony

Before becoming a member of this Church, I asked God, the Eternal Father, in fervent prayer about the truths of the Restoration. I know today, even as I knew that day, that hour, that moment 37 years ago, by the power of the Holy Ghost, that the principles and doctrines of the restoration of the gospel are true. God lives. Jesus is the Christ. Joseph Smith was the prophet of the restoration of the true gospel. The Book of Mormon is a record of holy prophets and another testament of the living Christ, who stands at the head of this Church. President Gordon B. Hinckley is the Lord's prophet for our day. He and 14 other Apostles are special witnesses of Christ in the only true Church on the earth. I pray that all of us will be able to answer the question "Are you still here?" and enter through the proper door to all the blessings of the gospel, now and forever. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *The Plan of Our Heavenly Father*, discussion 1 of *Uniform System for Teaching the Gospel* (1986).
2. See Acts 17:28-29.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 138:56.
4. See Alma 12:24.
5. 2 Nephi 9:13.
6. 2 Nephi 25:20.
7. See Joseph Smith—History 1:5-16.
8. See Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 28:2.
10. See 3 Nephi 11.
11. See Moroni 10:5.
12. Ephesians 2:19; see also verse 20.
13. Moroni 6:4.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 112:19.
15. "Now Let Us Rejoice," *Hymns*, no. 3.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

How is it with us?

It is wonderful, my brothers and sisters, to meet in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in this remarkable new Conference Center at the dawn of a new millennium.

One hundred years ago, President Lorenzo Snow stood in the Tabernacle to open the 70th annual conference of the Church. It was the first conference of the 1900s, and it came at the end of a period of great trial and tribulation for the Church. Total Church membership then was approaching 300,000, with the majority of those members living in Utah.

On Friday, April 6, 1900, President Snow said: "The Lord has prospered us amazingly, and we are doing large things at the present time. . . . Now that we are approaching our seventy-first year, the Lord expects that we will do something—something that will cause the nations to marvel, as what we have done has caused them already to wonder."

And then President Snow asked this compelling question: "Now, Latter-day Saints," he said, "how is it with us? We have received the Gospel. We have received the kingdom of God, established on the earth. We have had trouble; we have been persecuted. We were driven from Ohio; we were driven from Missouri; we were driven from Nauvoo; and once we were driven for a time from this beautiful city. Many have lost thousands of dollars; lost their homes and all they had, and some of the brethren have seen their wives and children lay down their lives because of the hardships they had to experience. . . . The people have looked with astonishment at the willingness of the Latter-day Saints to suffer these things. Why do we do this? . . . What is it that enables us to endure these persecutions and still rejoice?"

President Snow gave this answer: "It is because we have had revelations from the Almighty; because He has spoken to us in our souls and has given to us the Holy Ghost. . . . This Church will stand, because it is upon a firm basis. It is not from man; it is not from the study of the New Testament or the Old Testament; it is not the result of the learning that we received in colleges nor seminaries, but it has come directly from the Lord. The Lord has shown it to us by the revealing principle of the Holy Spirit of light and every man can receive this same spirit" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1900, 2–3).

Examine our commitment to Christ

It would be well for us, my brothers and sisters, to give careful consideration to that same question today: "How is it with us?" A century has passed; we are now in our 171st year as a church. Church membership is now approaching 11 million worldwide. Our members are respected leaders in almost every field of endeavor in nearly every country. The Church is growing. Temples are being built at an unprecedented pace. Missionary work continues to move forward. Church meetings are held on a regular basis in nearly every nation. Yet, as our prophets have indicated, "the Lord expects that we will do something."

But what? What is it that needs our personal attention? As I read and ponder the scriptures and carefully consider the Lord's counsel to His followers in every dispensation of time, it appears to me that the most important thing *every* one of us can do is to examine our own commitment and devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. We must carefully guard against spiritual apathy and work to maintain the full measure of our loving loyalty to the Lord.

True discipleship precludes complacency

While it is true that extraordinary strides are being made throughout the Church, the enormity of the task before us is overwhelming. Simply stated, we have a ministry to all of our Heavenly Father's children on both sides of the veil. In that context, we have barely scratched the surface of our calling. True discipleship, therefore, precludes any complacency. The Lord expects us to continue moving the Church forward and even to accelerate our pace toward the literal fulfillment of Daniel's prophetic vision of "a stone . . . cut out without hands . . . that . . . became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth" (Daniel 2:34-35).

To do this more effectively, each one of us needs to follow Nephi's counsel to "press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. [For] if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life" (2 Nephi 31:20). The power of the Holy Ghost will fill our hearts and minds as we look to the Savior for answers to the many challenges of life.

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, it is important that we each know for ourselves that Jesus is the Christ and that He has restored to the earth through the Prophet Joseph Smith the fulness of His everlasting gospel. As we press forward in His service, spiritual experiences will increase our faith, and we will find great joy. Our understanding of the essential doctrines and eternal truths that have been restored will become a firm foundation of our faith. And as we come to know and understand these true doctrines for ourselves, we will discover that there is also a great need for us to share our knowledge and beliefs with others while always maintaining their friendship and goodwill.

Share gospel truths with others

While we should be pleased to testify to the truthfulness of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ to all who will hear our message, there are times when all that we can hope to accomplish is to help those who are not members of the Church better understand our basic beliefs. There are many people who know a little about us, who are curious and who wonder about us but who are not ready to change their lifestyle or make eternal commitments. We need to be prepared to teach them in ways that they can understand and appreciate, even if they are not yet prepared to respond to spiritual promptings and to accept the gospel in their lives.

For example, it has been my experience that when members and our missionaries are guided by the Spirit, our conversations with non-Latter-day Saint friends and associates flow easily and naturally to the subject of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. All of us, regardless of race, color, or creed, belong to the family of our Heavenly Father. Most people share this belief. Our understanding and knowledge of this basic truth should compel us to love all of God's children as our brothers and sisters and to explain to them that we all lived premortally as spirit children of our Heavenly Father. There we learned about and accepted His plan for us to come to earth to gain a mortal body and be tested. Our deep-rooted respect for all mankind is enhanced by our understanding of our relationship one to another in our premortal life.

This understanding then makes it possible to explain in a nonthreatening way our belief in our eternal relationship to Jesus Christ and our deep commitment to Him. Our hope and faith are rooted in the profound understanding that He lives today and that He continues to lead and guide His Church and

His people. We rejoice in the knowledge of the living Christ, and we reverently acknowledge the miracles He continues to work today in the lives of those who have faith in Him. He is the head of the Church, which bears His name. He is our Savior and our Redeemer. Through Him we worship and pray to our Heavenly Father. We are grateful beyond measure for the essential and awesome power His Atonement has in each of our lives.

Because we love the Lord, we should be spiritually sensitive to moments when we can share the powerful and important truths of the gospel with others. Perhaps more importantly, however, we should seek at all times to purify ourselves and to lead such worthy lives that the Light of Christ emanates from us in all that we say and do. Our day-to-day lives should stand as immutable witness of our faith in Christ. In the words of the Apostle Paul, "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).

Teaching about the Restoration

Once these important principles are understood, we can then explain and expand the understanding of our Father's children by sharing with them how Jesus Himself established and organized His Church in the meridian of time by giving "some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-12).

From there we can help our friends and neighbors understand the Apostasy, or falling away from the original Church organized by the Lord, which was prophesied by those who helped to establish the Church in the first place. Paul wrote to the Thessalonian Christians who were eagerly anticipating the Second Coming of the Savior that "that day shall not come, except there come a falling away

first" (2 Thessalonians 2:3). He also warned Timothy that "the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but . . . they shall turn away their ears from the truth" (2 Timothy 4:3-4). And Peter presupposed a falling away when he spoke of "the times of refreshing" that would come before God would again "send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:19-21).

Do you see how naturally and easily one principle of the Restoration leads to the next? Peter's prophecy almost begs for a discussion of the restoration of the gospel in these latter days through the Prophet Joseph Smith. This in turn demands a dialogue about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and the restoration of the holy priesthood through the gift and power of God. From there it is so natural to share the principle of continuing revelation and the organization of the Church and its doctrines and programs.

Sharing testimonies is the greatest service

Brothers and sisters, the Lord expects us to do something. I believe we are expected to increase our own faith, shake off any possible feelings of apathy, and by the power of the Holy Ghost reaffirm our commitment and intensify our service to the Lord. Then, when we seek to clarify someone's understanding of the Church, our lives—well and faithfully lived—can serve as a magnifying glass through which others can examine the impact of gospel living. Under the light of our good example, the Spirit can enlarge understanding of the Church and its mission to all with whom we have contact.

We need not apologize for our beliefs nor back down from that which we know to be true. But we can share it in a spirit of loving understanding—boldly

and confidently, with an eye single to the glory of God—without pressuring our listeners or feeling that we have failed in our duty if they do not immediately accept what we believe.

When we have the companionship of the Holy Ghost, we can then do simple things to help bring better understanding of the gospel into the lives of the less-active members of the Church, as well as those who are not of our faith. There is no need for any new program to do this. We don't need a handbook or a calling or a training meeting. The only need is for good members of the Church to learn to rely upon the power of the Holy Ghost and, with this power, reach out and touch the lives of our Father's children. There is no greater service we can render than sharing our personal testimonies with those who lack an understanding of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

Resolve to do more to bless others

So, brothers and sisters, "how is it with us?" Are we ready to do something? Can each one of us resolve today to increase our personal spiritual preparation by seeking the guidance of the Holy Ghost and then, with His power as our companion, bless more of our Father's children with understanding and knowledge that the Church is true?

I testify that the Savior lives and He will bless each one of us if we will do all that we can to move this great work of His Church forward. May each one of us resolve to do something more as we be-

gin this new millennium is my prayer, which I offer humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

Elder Gary J. Coleman of the Seventy has just spoken to us, followed by Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting which will convene here in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain standard time.

We call your attention to the need to move your clocks ahead one hour before retiring tonight because of the change to daylight time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow.

We express gratitude to the combined choir from Brigham Young University for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon.

As you leave the conference this afternoon, we ask that you obey traffic rules, use caution, and be courteous in driving.

Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following his remarks, the choir will sing "More Holiness Give Me." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Athos M. Amorim of the Seventy.

Elder David B. Haight

A joy to be here

A little over two years ago at a meeting when President Gordon B. Hinckley announced this building would be built

in the year 2000, he then turned to me and said, "David, I expect you to be there."

President, I'm here. And I hope that if he says that we need another year or

so or whatever and that he expects me to be there, I hope that he says so, because I will follow his instructions.

It's a joy to be here with you and to witness this great historic meeting facility. I enjoyed President Hinckley's comments regarding the walnut from which this pulpit is made. The Tabernacle pulpit had both a red light and an amber light to assist the speaker with his time. As we get older, our eyesight usually isn't as sharp as it used to be. The amber light would come on, and if you didn't pay attention to that, the red light would start to blink. Brother LeGrand Richards, when the light was first installed, said, "Someone's put a silly light up here." He said, "I'll just put my hand over it." There isn't a light here today, so I don't know when I will end.

The Church's humble beginnings

What a joy it is to be here with all of you! As I look at this vast audience and reflect upon our beginnings—our humble, humble beginnings—just imagine the Peter Whitmer log cabin in Fayette, New York. The dimensions as I recall were about 20 feet by 30 feet. There were two little bedrooms upstairs. The Peter Whitmer family lived there. There were no plumbing facilities in the house. There was a well outside and only a fireplace for cooking and heating, but in that humble building 170 years ago the Church was organized. Just imagine.

The Prophet Joseph had received a revelation with instructions regarding the organization of the Church. And in that humble little cabin, not only was the Church organized but the translation of the Book of Mormon was completed within one of those upstairs bedrooms made available to the Prophet Joseph and Oliver Cowdery. And in that little farmhouse the first elders of this Church were ordained, when the Prophet Joseph ordained Oliver Cowdery and then Oliver ordained the Prophet Joseph Smith. And

in that little farmhouse the first sacrament meeting was held after the Church was organized. Just imagine. The sisters brought bread and some grape juice for that first sacrament. Those were the humble beginnings of what we witness here today.

As we sit here and look at this vast audience, it's thrilling to contemplate our future and reflect upon the humble pioneer beginnings. In 1820 at the Sacred Grove, in answer to the Prophet Joseph's humble prayer, God the Father and His Son appeared to that 14-year-old young man, ushering in this work, the restoration of the gospel.

Think of 1830—the meeting in that little log cabin, which for a while was the headquarters of the Church. Imagine such a historical but heavenly meeting in that 20-by-30-foot frontier cabin. Part of the account tells of Peter Whitmer's wife, Mary. Mary Whitmer got up earlier that Sunday morning and walked out into the living room, where people were sleeping on the floor covered with homemade quilts. They had come by wagon or buggy or horse—friends and people who had heard about what would be happening on April 6th. There were probably 50 people assembled for the meeting.

With that humble, humble beginning, we assemble here today. We just want to say, "Hallelujah! Thank the Lord for all that's taken place." Words come into my mind, as I stand here, of faith, devotion, and gratitude—the faith of the people and the faith that we demonstrate by being here today; the devotion of those early members and the devotion that we have; and our hearts are full of gratitude for what has happened and what lies ahead.

Tradition of sustaining leaders

I'm so grateful for my being able to be here, for my ancestry, for my wife, Ruby, for our children and all of our grandchildren. Our family has started a

tradition that on this day, wherever we might be living, we stand in front of the television set if we are at home or attend in our meetinghouse or Conference Center and we raise our right hand to sustain the officers of the Church, especially our living prophet. And so in my mind's eye, I have imagined today our own posterity in Brussels, Belgium; in London; Virginia; North Carolina; Texas; and California—raising their hands to the square on this day, learning how to do it, learning that it's important in the Church that they sustain the leaders.

Gratitude for the Restoration

My heart is full of gratitude on this day for the revelations given to the Prophet Joseph Smith and for all that he did to set in motion the Restoration, the revelations necessary for the onrolling of this work, line upon line and precept upon precept. Ponder the ruggedness of our beginning—the humble, humble beginning—and then look at us today.

He received the revelation, now the first section of the Doctrine and Covenants, in which the Lord promised that Joseph Smith and others would receive the power and the authority to bring the Church “out of obscurity and out of darkness” (D&C 1:30). Think about what has happened under the inspired leadership of President Hinckley. The Joseph Smith Building we have today—in the preserving of that wonderful old building that was the Hotel Utah and is now the fine edifice that it is—we saw that come from the inspiration given to President Hinckley. And think of this building, as he explained to us, the direction that had come to him. And so to all of us as we assemble here today, I hope that we have grateful hearts for the knowledge that we have and the testimonies we have and for the feelings we have, that this is only the beginning. This is only a chapter in the onrolling of this work.

In that humble setting in Fayette, New York, when we think of what has taken place since then and what has happened in our lives and with our ancestors, I hope all of us have that gratitude and would have a desire to pass that on to our posterity and the knowledge that we have and the testimonies that we have that this work is true. I hope that we feel grateful for the eternal blessings we can receive as we watch and are part of the unfolding of the temple expansion throughout the world and of that blessing coming to the people.

Challenges in Ghana will be resolved

As Brother Pace was speaking here a few moments ago about the challenges that we have in Ghana, I know that that will be taken care of. I stood under a tree on the campus of the university there and dedicated Ghana for the preaching of the gospel. Brother Banyan Dadson, who was vice president of the university and a member of the Church, stood there on that day and explained to the people how the natives in Ghana had settled that part of West Africa, and what a blessing it had been for those tribes of people. I know that that problem will be resolved; that will only be a chapter in the onrolling of this work.

Be a strong link in our family chains

President Hinckley, in a comment a short time ago, talked about the links of his family, his family chain, and hoping that he would be a strong link in that chain and that *his* link would remain strong. He told the account of attempting to pull the stump of a tree out of the ground on their property and how the chain had broken. He went to the store to try to get another link to fix the chain so they could pull the tree stump out, which they were finally able to do. He said he thought of his own responsibility

ity to his posterity, to remain a strong link in that chain (see "Keep the Chain Unbroken," *Brigham Young Magazine*, spring 2000, 6).

I would hope and pray that in our own families, all of us, that we would have a desire to be a strong link in our own family chain, in our posterity, so that the eternal blessings that are part of the gospel, the blessings of the temple and the eternities, will be taught to our families in such a way that they will go on and on forever to affect many, many people. Be sure that those links are strong in your chain and that you pass the testimony that you have, the devotion that you have, to future generations. This vast audience here today is only a chapter in what will take place in the spreading of this work throughout the world.

Share testimonies; be a good example

The Savior, following His Resurrection, appeared on the seashore when Peter and the others had gone back to fishing. He called out, asking if they had caught any fish, and they hadn't. He asked them to cast their nets on the other side. You remember the story so well.

They brought in the nets full of fish, and as they sat on the seashore, the Savior asked Peter, "Lovest thou me more

than these?" pointing to the valuable fish jumping in the nets. "Lovest thou me more than these?"

And Peter says, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee."

Then He said, "Feed my lambs." Then He asked Peter the second time and the third time, then directed, "Feed my sheep. . . . Feed my sheep." (See John 21:15-17.)

May we have that testimony, that desire in our hearts, to teach others, to explain what we believe, and to live lives of righteousness, to live the good life, to be an example to mankind, and to be able to spread this work not only by what we say but by the way we act, the way we live, the way we represent the Church, and the type of example we are to mankind.

I know that God lives, that He is our Father—He loves us all—and that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of a *living* God, and that they're real and they live today. I so bear witness, leaving you my love and testimony, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "More Holiness Give Me."

Elder Athos M. Amorim offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 170th Annual General Conference, convened in the Conference Center on Saturday, April 1, 2000, at 6:00 P.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by male members of the Tabernacle Choir, joined by returned missionaries. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren, we welcome you to this general priesthood session of the 170th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

These services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission

to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Tabernacle, the Assembly Hall, the the BYU Marriott Center, the Missionary Training Center, and in locations in many countries throughout the world.

The singing during this session will be given by male members of the Tabernacle Choir, joined by returned missionaries, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Richard Elliott at the organ.

We shall now begin this priesthood meeting with the choir singing "Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder W. Don Ladd of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise."

Elder W. Don Ladd offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

The choir will now sing "Praise to the Man." Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then speak to us.

The choir sang "Praise to the Man."

Elder Richard G. Scott

The sanctity of womanhood

There is one title that the First Presidency and the Twelve seldom use, considering it too sacred—that of Apostle. It is in that role that I come to you, my beloved priesthood brethren.

I would speak of the sanctity of womanhood. President Hinckley has eloquently captured what the Lord has repeatedly inspired His servants to say of His precious daughters:

"Woman is God's supreme creation. Only after the earth had been formed, after the day had been separated from the night, after the waters had been divided from the land, after vegetation and animal life had been created, and after man had been placed on the earth, was woman created; and only then was the work pronounced complete and good.

"Of all the creations of the Almighty, there is none more beautiful, none more inspiring than a lovely daughter of God who walks in virtue with an understanding of why she should do so, who honors and respects her body as a thing sacred and divine, who cultivates her mind and constantly enlarges the horizon of her

understanding, who nurtures her spirit with everlasting truth."¹

Then President Hinckley warns us, "God will hold us accountable if we neglect His daughters."²

Satan's campaign against womanhood

So many of our sisters are disheartened, even discouraged and disillusioned. Others are in serious trouble because of the choices they make. Satan has unleashed a seductive campaign to undermine the sanctity of womanhood, to deceive the daughters of God and divert them from their divine destiny. He well knows women are the compassionate, self-sacrificing, loving power that binds together the human family. He would focus their interests solely on their physical attributes and rob them of their exalting roles as wives and mothers. He has convinced many of the lie that they are third-class citizens in the kingdom of God. That falsehood has led some to trade their divinely given femininity for male coarseness.

The growing success of Lucifer's efforts was emblazoned on my mind

when in Salt Lake City I turned my car in front of a pickup truck loaded with attractive young women. Their vehicle then swerved in front of me, cutting dangerously close. The girls vented their displeasure with multiple vulgar comments and obscene gestures. They were dressed predominantly in male attire, yet some had immodest clothing that left little to the imagination. My heart sank. These are daughters of God. I resolved that if I ever had the chance, I would enlist the righteous priesthood of God to help such misguided young women.

Help young women overcome worldly trends

Brethren, we can and must help them. I fear that much of their plight comes from our own neglect or misdeeds. As a priesthood husband, father, son, or brother, each of us absolutely must help each daughter of God we can to realize what sacred characteristics Father in Heaven has given her. Many are being cheated of the rich, full life and the blessings God would have them receive. Will you help them understand what they are sacrificing as they are led as innocent, blind sheep by those who, for personal gain and self-justification, would rob them of their priceless womanhood? Because it is their nature to give and please others, many women do not realize their intrinsic worth. That loss makes them vulnerable to those who would convince them that their major role is to be physically appealing.

So many of our own young women sacrifice their God-given endowment of femininity, deep spirituality, and a caring interest in others on the altar of popular worldly opinion. Young men, let such young women know that you will not seek an eternal companion from those that are overcome by worldly trends. Many dress and act immodestly because they are told that is what you want. In sensitive ways, communicate how distasteful revealing

attire is to you, a worthy young man, and how it stimulates unwanted emotions from what you see against your will.

Those young women who do embrace conservative dress standards and exhibit the attributes of a devoted Latter-day Saint are often criticized for not being "with it." Encourage them by expressing gratitude for their worthy example. Thank them for doing what is pleasing to the Lord and in time will bless their own husband and children. Many young women have returned to righteousness because of the example and understanding support of a worthy priesthood bearer. Perhaps a group of you could frankly discuss your concerns in an appropriate setting, such as a Sunday School or seminary class. Will you begin a private crusade to help young women understand how precious they are to God and attractive to you as they magnify their feminine traits and divinely given attributes of womanhood? You might even help mold the character and devotion of your own future eternal companion.

Influence of brothers, fathers, bishops

As a brother, you can have a powerful, positive influence in your sister's life. Compliment her when she looks especially nice. She may listen to you more than to your parents when you suggest that she wear modest clothing. Simple courtesies like opening the door for her and building her self-esteem will encourage her to find her real worth.

Be a wise father who showers attention on each daughter. It will bring joy to you and fulfillment to her. When a daughter feels the warmth and approval of her father, she will not likely seek attention in inappropriate ways. As a father, acknowledge her good behavior. Listen to her. Praise her for her strengths. You will greatly enrich her life. She will model the behavior she observes. Let her see you treat your wife and other women with admiration and honest respect.

Bishops, encourage each young woman to ponder last Saturday's inspiring Young Women meeting. It will give her a vision of who she is and help her in her quest to fulfill her divine destiny. It will help her see how essential it is to stand valiantly against the destructive tide of the world and to bear her testimony of Jesus Christ.

Brethren, as we honor womanhood, each daughter of God will be encouraged to do likewise.

Sacred expressions of love

Now I would speak of something that is most sacred. When we were created, Father in Heaven put in our body the capacity to stir powerful emotions. Within the covenant of marriage, when properly used in ways acceptable to both spouses and to the Lord, those emotions open the doors for children to come to earth. Such sacred expressions of love are an essential part of the covenant of marriage. Within marriage, however, the stimulation of those emotions can either be used as an end unto itself or to allow a couple to draw closer in oneness through the beautiful, appropriate expression of these feelings between husband and wife. There are times, brethren, when you need to restrain those feelings. There are times when you need to allow their full expression. Let the Lord guide you in ways that will enrich your marriage.

There are men, and unfortunately some women, who experiment with stimulating those emotions by influences outside of the covenant of marriage. There is a great difference between love and lust. Pure love yields happiness and engenders trust. It is the foundation of eternal joy. Lust will destroy that which is enriching and beautiful. A husband must have no private, hidden agenda that is kept secret from his wife. Sharing everything about each other's personal life is powerful spiritual insurance. When you

travel, take along a picture of your wife. Set it before you. Remember how you are loved and trusted. You will not be tempted to contaminate your mind or violate your covenants.

Destructiveness of pornography

One of the most damning influences on earth—one that has caused uncountable grief, suffering, heartache, and destroyed marriages—is the onslaught of pornography in all of its vicious, corroding, destructive forms. Whether it be through the printed page, movies, television, obscene lyrics, the telephone, or the flickering personal computer screen, pornography is overpoweringly addictive and severely damaging. This potent tool of Lucifer degrades the mind, heart, and soul of any who use it. All who are caught in its seductive, tantalizing web and remain so will become addicted to its immoral, destructive influence. For many, that addiction cannot be overcome without help. The tragic pattern is so familiar. It begins with a curiosity that is fueled by its stimulation and is justified by the false premise that when done privately, it does no harm to anyone else. Lulled by this lie, the experimentation goes deeper, with more powerful stimulations, until the web closes and a terribly immoral, addictive habit is formed.

How can a man, particularly a priesthood bearer, not think of the damage emotionally and spiritually caused to women, especially to a wife, from such abhorrent activity? The participation in pornography in any of its lurid forms is a manifestation of unbridled selfishness.

Well did inspired Nephi declare, "And [the devil] will . . . pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, . . . and thus [he] cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell."³

Stake presidents and bishops, warn of this evil. Invite any captured by it to come to you for help.

“Be ye clean”

To each of you as an Aaronic Priesthood and Melchizedek Priesthood bearer, I solemnly declare as a servant of Jesus Christ that despite what is taught in the world, the violation of the law of chastity is a very grievous sin. For your own well-being and for the blessing of His daughters, be ye clean. If there is even the slightest tendency to participate in immorality, eliminate it from your life. Where there has been any violation, talk to a bishop or stake president and clean up your life. Make it pure and righteous. You bear the priesthood of God. I testify that the Redeemer will help you. If you seek it, He will lead you to that help so that through full repentance, the Lord can forgive you.

Express love for wives, mothers

I know what it is to love a daughter of God who with grace and devotion served with the full feminine splendor of her righteous womanhood. As a husband, consistently tell your wife how much you love her. It will bring her great happiness. As a son, tell your mother how you love her. It will give her great joy. Let us be grateful to our Father in Heaven for His precious daughters. Let us help them as

much as we can. Then let us encourage every woman who questions her value to turn to her Heavenly Father and His glorified Son for a supernal confirmation of her immense individual worth. I testify that as each woman seeks it in faith and obedience, the Savior will continually prompt her through the Holy Ghost. That guidance will lead her to fulfillment, peace, and a consuming joy through magnifying her divinely appointed, sacred womanhood. I know the Savior will do that. I testify that He lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

This printed text includes segments that were not delivered due to time constraints.

1. “Our Responsibility to Our Young Women,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1988, 11.
2. *Ensign*, Sept. 1988, 11.
3. 2 Nephi 28:21.

President Hinckley

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us.

We will now be pleased to hear from Bishop H. David Burton, the Presiding Bishop of the Church. He will be followed by Elder Angel Abrea of the Seventy.

Bishop H. David Burton

Good evening, brethren. For months we have worried about this building's readiness for general conference. A miracle has been accomplished—a miracle made possible because professionals, as well as common, garden-variety men and women, have displayed uncommon devotion, sacrifice, and inspiration far beyond normal industry standards. I express deep appreciation to my counselors and to all individuals who have shared their talents on this project.

I've been in this building many times during its construction, but as I see it filled with priesthood holders tonight, I marvel at its size and beauty. For you who follow international soccer (football), the distance from where I stand to the very last row of the balcony is about three-fourths the length of one field. The distance is the equivalent of three basketball courts placed end to end or nearly four tennis courts fashioned in the same manner. A golfer would probably select

a nine iron to hit the ball over the last balcony row, and a world-class sprinter could run the distance in about nine seconds. To use a word I often hear, it is awesome!

Time-out to discuss priesthood issues

On occasion I enjoy participating in or viewing sporting events. My wife suggests the time between occasions is too short. In many sports, if a participant or coach places the outstretched fingers of one hand in a perpendicular position to the palm of his other hand, it is a signal for time-out. The contest is temporarily halted while coaches and players discuss strategy. The term *time-out* is also used by some parents to describe to their children a state in which they will be placed if they continue on a course contrary to their parents' wishes. Time-out offers a person a chance to think about his or her behavior.

My Aaronic Priesthood colleagues, let's place ourselves in time-out this evening to discuss a few priesthood issues.

Honor the priesthood seven days a week

Several weeks ago I was talking with my 16-year-old granddaughter. I asked her what she would tell the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood if she could speak to them. She said, "Grandpa, I would ask them to show respect for the priesthood and to be priesthood holders seven days a week rather than just one day, Sunday. Some guys do not show respect for the priesthood because they use profanity; some are involved in pornography; and a few are into drugs." I'm certain, my young brethren, that you'll agree that profanity, pornography, and drugs should not be a part of the life of a priesthood holder.

The priesthood isn't something we take off during the week and put on for Sunday. It is a 24-7 privilege and bless-

ing—that is, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Eliminate profane and crude speech

Profanity and crudeness have become commonplace and are accepted by many as a normal part of their speech. Our sense of right and wrong has been dimmed by a constant bombardment of profanity and crudeness. It is rampant in music, schools, sports, shopping malls, and in our workplaces. Much everyday conversation is laced with crude terms and sprinkled with outright profane expressions, sometimes under the guise of humor.

Recently I was in a department store trying on shoes. Four young men were looking at what they labeled missionary shoes. It was evident at least two of the young men had received mission calls and were there to find shoes suitable for missionary service. I was surprised by a barrage of crude terms with a few profanities which seemed to routinely roll off their tongues. When they noticed there was someone else nearby, I heard one say, "Hey, guys, we better clean up our language," as he motioned with his head in my direction.

President Hinckley has said: "Conversation is the substance of friendly social activity. It can be happy. It can be light. It can be earnest. It can be funny. But it must not be salty, or uncouth, or foul if one is in sincerity a believer in Christ" (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [1997], 494). Profanity and priesthood are not compatible. Neither is profanity compatible with missionary service. Profane and crude terms, if part of our conversation, need to be eliminated from our vocabularies. Conversation is one of the windows to our souls.

Avoid all forms of pornography

During time-out let's talk about pornography. In recent years pornography

has spread like wildfire. We are exposed to it daily. Pornography is as addictive as many substances we would not even consider taking into our bodies. The consequences of pornography are catastrophic. Keep in mind that Satan does not want us to be happy or successful in our Aaronic Priesthood ministry. Make no mistake, he wants us to be miserable. His goal is to capture our hearts by enticing us to participate in terrible things such as pornography. Stay away from it. We must discipline ourselves to avoid books, magazines, music, pictures, videos, DVDs, movies, Internet sites, television programming—anything that contains pornography or sensual material. Pornography and priesthood are not compatible. Respect the priesthood; call a permanent time-out to any pornographic influence.

Refrain from using illicit drugs

President Hinckley has reminded us that the “modern drug scourge has become as a plague on the world. . . . In most cases, the death it brings is not swift, but rather, it follows a long period spent in misery and pain and regret. Unlike the plagues of old, from which there was no known defense, the defense is clear and relatively easy in the case of illicit drugs. It lies in simply refraining from touching them” (“The Scourge of Illicit Drugs,” in *Speaking Out on Moral Issues* [1992], 127). We would not place our lives in jeopardy by playing with a venomous snake. Drugs are just as dangerous as the reptile’s deadly venom.

Leading the family is highest priority

Our son returned to his home recently to find his son was sitting at the kitchen table with elbows on the table and his chin in his hands. Another son exhibited a sad countenance as he sat in the living room staring out the window. Their mom was not visible. Our son asked the boys where she might be. They

pointed to the bathroom. He quietly knocked on the door and asked, “Honey, are you in there?” She replied, “I’ve put myself in time-out.” Adults need an occasional time-out.

Melchizedek Priesthood holders, please join us in time-out. In the battle of daily living, it is easy to lose focus on our ministries as fathers and priesthood holders. If we are not careful, our vocations, hobbies, recreation, and even perhaps our Church service can adversely impact our responsibility as fathers and husbands.

President Howard W. Hunter had only one opportunity to address a general conference priesthood meeting while he was President of the Church. On that occasion, October 1994, President Hunter entitled his talk “Being a Righteous Husband and Father.” In that masterful address, he outlined a number of standards and expectations for all who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood. I commend the entire address for your review. Tonight I mention just two. President Hunter said:

“A man who holds the priesthood regards the family as ordained of God. Your leadership of the family is your most important and sacred responsibility. The family is the most important unit in time and in eternity and, as such, transcends every other interest in life” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 68; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 50).

President Harold B. Lee said, “The most important of the Lord’s work you and I will ever do will be within the walls of our own homes” (*Stand Ye in Holy Places* [1974], 255). We need to honestly search and plumb the depths of our souls. Are we doing all we should do to give our families gospel instruction and governance, or are we leaving this responsibility to others? Leadership in the family often requires us to reorder our priorities in order to find the necessary time. Quality and quantity time are essential.

President Hunter also reminded us, "A man who holds the priesthood leads his family in Church participation so they will know the gospel and be under the protection of the covenants and ordinances" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 69; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 51).

For us to accomplish this we must make certain our personal lives are in order. Hypocrisy has never worked, and it will not work today. We are required to lead out in righteousness and encourage our families to follow our examples. Lead out in family home evening. Lead out in scripture study. Provide priesthood blessings. Lead out in personal and family prayer. President Monson said, "Remember that a man never stands taller than when he is upon his knees" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1964, 130; or *Improvement Era*, June 1964, 509).

We are on the Lord's errand

A time-out usually concludes with a little pep talk. Brethren, we can prevail

and ultimately win the contest. We can honor and respect the priesthood on a seven-day-a-week, 24-hour-a-day basis. We can banish profanity, pornography, and drugs from our lives, as well as any other unwholesome or unclean activity. We can provide our families with the priesthood leadership and the spiritual direction they require. We can do all this and much more if we will draw near to the Savior, honor the sacred priesthood we hold, and be faithful to the covenants we have made.

I testify we are on the Lord's errand. He is our Savior. He is our Redeemer. He has atoned for our sins. He is our Advocate with the Father. He lives. He loves us unconditionally. We are bearers of His priesthood. I love President Hinckley, his counselors, the Twelve, and my fellow General Authorities, and I testify of their goodness, their greatness, and their authority. I love you, my fellow holders of the priesthood, and pray for our success. In the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Angel Abrea

Your personal testimony

I would like to have an imaginary conversation about personal testimony with the priesthood holders. I believe that this colloquial way will help me to convey my message. For the purpose of our discussion, I will use the names of my grandsons; please imagine that these names are yours and that I am speaking directly to each one of you young men.

My dear James, when you were a young boy you bore your testimony and said, "I know the gospel is true. I know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. I know that Joseph Smith was a true prophet."

You knew those things because others told you. Because of your trust in

your parents, your bishop, and others, you never questioned that knowledge. But now, as you grow more independent in understanding, comprehension, and perception of all the different variables that this intense and beautiful life presents to you, frequently you realize that not all men have the same testimony or the "peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7).

Maybe, Jonathan, you have already realized that some adults are cynical and will not talk to you about the beautiful concepts of the Atonement, the Resurrection, and eternal life. Instead, they will tell you to "eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die" (2 Nephi 28:7). Others you will see groping and grasping, looking for answers which they do

not find. And yet they will still try to demonstrate to you a knowledge of that which they do not have. Even others will say, "Well, maybe these things are true, but maybe they aren't. The best thing we can do is live our own lives the way we see fit, and then if there is a life after this one, we will see what happens."

Now, Andrew, I can understand the thoughts and feelings you may have in your mind and heart. I can understand that when you listen to these different messages, you may ask yourself what is right and what is not.

I'm sure that many questions have come to your mind. The truth is that you will not be condemned for wondering or questioning if you make a sincere effort to find the answer. Our mental powers have been given to us to use. Faith based on personal prayer, study, and obedience is more lasting than blind faith; it is more rewarding, and for sure it is better grounded.

Be humble and continue learning

And you, Paul, do you remember when the Savior said:

"Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3-4).

We are benefited by retaining the humility and teachableness of a child, but we must be sure to continue growing and not be content with the limited knowledge or comprehension of the gospel which a child has. Remember, Paul, what the Apostle of your same name said to the Corinthians: "Brethren, be not children in understanding; howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men" (1 Corinthians 14:20).

Testimony is our greatest possession

Well now, my dear Russell, you will ask yourself, "In that case, do I have to go and look for the answer myself? Can anybody have this kind of testimony? Is it a gift only for a few? Do those who say they *know* really only *think* they know, or have they convinced themselves through a psychological trick?"

In answer to your questions, and to give more light to these things, let me tell you that Elder John A. Widtsoe said that those who truly have a testimony of the gospel have "the highest type of knowledge. It comes as a revelation when truth is known and obeyed. . . . It is really *man's chief possession*" ("What Does It Mean to Have a Testimony?" *Improvement Era*, May 1945, 273; italics added). Do you realize that a testimony is defined as "the highest type of knowledge" and "man's chief possession" and that in the Doctrine and Covenants the Savior mentions it as a knowledge "which shall dwell in your heart"? (D&C 8:2).

Maybe it will be difficult to understand this at your age, but our testimony is something that we will take with us to the next life. We will leave all our earthly possessions behind, but that knowledge, that inner conviction will remain with us. Think of Joseph Smith: those who took his life could not take his chief possession—his testimony. The Prophet Joseph took that priceless possession with him through death's veil into eternity, where the Lord had promised him "a throne for you in the kingdom of my Father" (D&C 132:49). But at the same time, that testimony, together with "a fame and name that cannot be slain" (D&C 135:3), remains here with us. We hear the resounding witness of God's prophet testifying "that [Christ] lives! For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father" (D&C 76:22-23).

How to obtain a testimony

My dear Matthew, now that you have been able to see the eternal dimension of a testimony, we can continue with our conversation, showing that you can have your own testimony if you do what is necessary to obtain one.

In one of those difficult times that the faithful and dedicated young Nephi had with his rebellious brothers, he reminded them of the following guide to obtaining a testimony. The Lord declared, "If ye will not harden your hearts, and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in keeping my commandments, surely these things shall be made known unto you" (1 Nephi 15:11). Now we can review the steps Nephi described.

First, *don't harden your heart*. Seek to know. In other words, have an intense, consuming desire to know. Give place for a seed to be planted in your heart. And if you do this, do you know what the promise is? Alma tells us, "He that will not harden his heart, to him is given . . . to know the mysteries of God" (Alma 12:10).

Second, *ask in faith*. In your study of the scriptures, have you noted how many times the phrase "believing that ye shall receive" accompanies the commandment of praying and asking? In the process of asking for knowledge, we have to exercise faith—believing before receiving. To illustrate this part of our conversation, Alma gives us a good example when he explained how he obtained his testimony:

"Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; and this is the spirit of revelation which is in me" (Alma 5:46).

Third, *keep the commandments*. I think that the words of the Book of Mormon point out the blessings that we can

obtain if we abound in good works. King Benjamin declared to his people, "If you believe all these things see that ye do them" (Mosiah 4:10). And the great missionary Ammon said, "Yea, he that repenteth and exerciseth faith, and bringeth forth good works, and prayeth continually without ceasing—unto such it is given to know the mysteries of God" (Alma 26:22).

Seek companionship of the Holy Ghost

Now, Cole, we have analyzed the different steps we should follow in our search for a testimony. But there is yet the most important help available that can give us confirmation and absolute assurance, and it is your right when you live worthy to receive the companionship of the Holy Ghost. Remember the promise in Moroni: "And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things" (Moroni 10:5). Pay attention that I said to *receive* the companionship of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost has the power to bring light and understanding to our lives, but we must pay the price to seek and win His companionship.

Elder Marion G. Romney wrote: "It is the mission of the Holy Ghost to reveal the truth of heaven to those who qualify to receive it. Every one of us, if we will, may so qualify. We must ever keep in mind, however, that he will not dwell in an unholy environment. He is used to the society of God, for he is an associate of the Father and the Son. When we receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, we are commanded to receive him; he is not commanded to come to us. But if, with all our hearts, we truly seek him, he will come to us and guide us in the making of decisions at every crisis of our lives" ("Revelation in Our Personal Affairs," *Relief Society Magazine*, Oct. 1955, 647).

The Holy Ghost is given to us to witness of the Father and the Son; that Jesus Christ is our Redeemer; that there is

a prophet upon the earth who presides over the true Church that carries the Savior's name, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; and that all the works and promises of God will be fulfilled in His time and in His own way.

What a testimony represents in our lives

And now, my youngest grandson, Tate, we can end this conversation, mentioning what a testimony is. Maybe the best way to define it would be by looking at what a testimony represents in our lives.

It is to say, "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know" (1 Nephi 3:7), and then to act in consequence.

It is to have the peace that comes with knowing that all possible has been done, that all talents have been exercised to the maximum.

It is to follow the commandment of the Lord to Joshua: "Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Joshua 1:9).

And it is to "be patient in afflictions" (D&C 31:9).

It is to never give up, but to stand up as an example to others.

It is to "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15).

It is to declare His generation: "Jesus Christ [is] the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning" (Mosiah 3:8).

Yes, these and many other characteristics and actions model a testimony. And this is my testimony to you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Bishop H. David Burton, Presiding Bishop of the Church, has spoken to us, followed by Elder Angel Abrea of the Seventy.

It will now be our pleasure to hear from President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. When he concludes, the choir and congregation will sing "Ye Elders of Israel."

President James E. Faust

Brethren, this evening we are part of history in the making. We are convened in the largest of all priesthood meetings ever held in any dispensation. We rejoice in the attendance of all of those beyond the great Conference Center, numbering in the hundreds of thousands. Meeting for the first time in this new, grand edifice is a great moment in the history of humanity. We are indebted to the Lord, who inspired President Gordon B. Hinckley with the prophetic vision that brought about its construction and made it all possible. We thank Bishop H. David Burton, Bishop Richard C. Edgley, Bishop Keith B. McMullen,

and all who have had anything to do with its construction. Now that we have it, we must use it to strengthen the faith of our people.

The power of self-mastery

Tonight, brethren, I should like to speak about the power of self-mastery in its larger sense. Self-mastery is essential to invoke the power of the priesthood of God. This is because this great, divine agency can be exercised only in righteousness. Self-mastery requires self-determination and strength of character. It enhances our own gifts and talents in

a remarkable way. It is the power of noble manhood.

Every human soul, especially priesthood holders, has the challenge of controlling his or her thoughts, appetites, speech, temper, and desires. One of these may be a bad temper. When I was a boy, I had red hair. At times my mother accused me of having a temper to go with it. They used to call me "Red." Those were fighting words. I think I have learned to control it. Those with red hair are not the only ones who must learn to control an unruly temper. Willpower is necessary so that irritations do not take over our emotions.

A local newspaper recently reported on a phenomenon accompanying the increased traffic on our roads: "It is the normal scenario of rush-hour traffic: honking, tailgating, obscene gestures. Even outright violence is on the increase in our driving." Sometimes tempers get out of control, and we call it "road rage." I have often wondered why some men's personalities change when they get behind the steering wheel of their car, secured by glass and metal. In some way this seems to excuse their rude behavior. Road rage is not caused by traffic congestion but by attitude. As some drivers become impatient and overaggressive, they may lose control and cause serious injury, even death, to others on the highway.

Self-mastery is a challenge for every individual. Only we can control our appetites and passions. Self-mastery cannot be bought by money or fame. It is the ultimate test of our character. It requires climbing out of the deep valleys of our lives and scaling our own Mount Everests.

Learning self-mastery as missionaries

As full-time missionaries we learn great lessons in self-mastery. We learn to get up when we should get up, to work

when we should work, and to go to bed when we should go to bed. Full-time missionaries are generally admired and even respected, though their message may not be as well received as we would like. The First Presidency and others of the General Authorities meet with many heads of state, ambassadors, and ministers from all over the world. Frequently, when the subject comes up, these men of great power and influence speak with admiration and respect for the missionaries they have seen in their homelands.

Our young elders are models of young manhood. When they come home, some are criticized as being self-righteous for maintaining a decent appearance and keeping their hair trimmed neatly. I cannot understand why a returned missionary is considered self-righteous if he tries to live the standards and principles he has taught as a representative of the Lord to the people where he has served. Of course returned missionaries are not expected to wear white shirts and ties all of the time. But wearing sloppy clothes and weird hairstyles to supposedly look trendy is not proper for one who holds the divine commission of the priesthood. Returned missionaries are an example to the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood, who will be the future missionaries. Often that which is *seen* by the Aaronic Priesthood is more powerful and persuasive than what is *said*.

Act out of strength, not weakness

Men and women often attempt to gain notice and approval of the group from whom they seek acceptance. Such peer pressure may cause them to do things they would not otherwise do. This is acting out of weakness, not strength. The Lord promises us through Moroni:

"And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all

men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them.”¹

In its simplest terms, self-mastery is doing those things we should do and not doing those things we should not do. It requires strength, willpower, and honesty. As the traffic on the communications highway becomes a parking lot, we must depend more and more on our own personal moral filters to separate the good from the bad. Marvelous as it is in many ways, there is something hypnotic about using the Internet. I refer specifically to spending endless time in chat rooms or visiting the pornography sites.

Mastering our thoughts

I now turn to mastery of our own private thoughts. In this realm, conscience is the only referee that can blow the whistle when we get out of control. If not bridled, our thoughts can run wild. Our minds are a part of us that really require discipline and control. I believe reading the scriptures is the best washing machine for unclean or uncontrolled thoughts. For those who are eligible and worthy, the sanctity of the holy temple can lift our thoughts above the earthy.

When I was participating in athletics and served in the military, I heard expressions that made me ashamed to hear them. If, as Samuel Johnson suggested, “language is the dress of thought,”² then the language we are hearing on television, in the movies, and even in our schools is a poor commentary on our current thinking. I worry about young people becoming desensitized as they continually hear or use this bad language. I believe that the young man of character is not coarse in his speech. Holders of the holy priesthood of God should never use foul language or obscene gestures.

Mastering our physical appetites

I now speak of the absolute necessity of controlling all physical appetites. These might in one sense be called the “thorn in the flesh.”³ Harry Emerson Fosdick provides an important context for self-control: “Self-denial . . . is not the negative, forbidding thing that often we shake our heads about. In one sense there is no such thing as self-denial, for what we call such is the necessary price we pay for things on which our hearts are set.”⁴

One of the great foundations of personal power is purity. Alfred Lord Tennyson captured this when he penned, “My strength is as the strength of ten, / Because my heart is pure.”⁵ With all my heart I urge you wonderful young people not to take a secret shame with you to your marriage. You may never be able to forget it. You will want to go through life with the strength that comes from a clear conscience, which will permit you one day to stand before your Maker and say, “My soul is pure.” Self-denial is not restrictive. It is liberating. It is the pathway to freedom. It is strength. It is an essential element of purity. Shakespeare expressed it well through his character Hamlet:

Refrain to-night;
And that shall lend a kind of easiness
To the next abstinence: the next more
easy;
For use almost can change the stamp
of nature,
And either master the devil, or throw
him out
With wondrous potency.⁶

President Grant’s example of self-mastery

Heber J. Grant was the first President of the Church I had the privilege of meeting. He was truly a great man. We admired him because part of his strength

was his great determination for self-mastery. His father died when he was only nine days old, and his widowed mother struggled to raise him. He was conscientious in helping her and trying to take care of her.

"When he was older and wanted to join a baseball team, . . . the other [boys laughed] at him and [called] him a 'sissy' because he could not throw the ball between the bases. His teammates teased him so much that . . . he . . . made up his mind that he was going to play with the nine who would win the championship of the Territory of Utah. He purchased a baseball and practiced hour after hour, throwing at a neighbor's old barn. Often his arm would ache so much he could hardly go to sleep at night. He kept on practicing and . . . improving and advancing from one team to another until he finally [succeeded] in playing [on the team that] won the [territorial] championship!"⁷

Another example of his self-mastery was his determination to become a good penman. His penmanship was so bad that when two of his friends looked at it, one said, "That writing looks like hen tracks." "No," said the other, "it looks as if lightning has struck an ink bottle." This, of course, touched young Heber Grant's pride. While he was still in his teens as a policy clerk in the office of H. R. Mann and Co., "he was offered three times his salary to go to San Francisco as a penman. He later became a teacher of penmanship and bookkeeping at the University of [Utah]. In fact, with a specimen he had written before he turned seventeen, he took first prize in a territorial fair against four professional penmen."⁸

Singing was another challenge for President Grant. As a small child, he could not carry a tune. When he was 10, a music instructor tried to teach him the simplest song and finally gave up in despair. At age 26, when he became an

Apostle, he asked Professor Sims if he could teach him how to sing. After listening to him, Professor Sims replied, "Yes, you can learn to sing, but I would like to be forty miles away while you are doing it." This only challenged him to try harder.⁹

President Grant one time said, "I have practiced on the 'Doxology'¹⁰ between three and four hundred times, and there are only four lines, and I cannot sing it yet."¹¹ It is reported that on a trip to Arizona with Elder Rudger Clawson and Elder J. Golden Kimball, President Grant "asked them if he could sing one hundred songs on the way. They thought he was joking and said, 'Fine, go right ahead.' After the first forty, they assured him if he sang the other sixty they would both have a nervous breakdown. He sang the other sixty."¹²

By practicing all of his life, he made some improvement in singing but perhaps not as much as in baseball and penmanship, which he mastered. President Grant had a favorite quotation from Ralph Waldo Emerson which he lived by: "That which we persist in doing becomes easier for us to do; not that the nature of the thing itself is changed, but that our power to do is increased."

Self-mastery is a spiritual quest

As priesthood holders, we should not look for excuses when we lose our self-control. Even though our circumstances may be challenging, we can all strive for self-mastery. Great blessings of personal satisfaction come from doing so. Self-mastery is related to spirituality, which is the central quest of mortality. As President David O. McKay once said:

"Spirituality is the consciousness of victory over self, and of communion with the Infinite. Spirituality impels one to conquer difficulties and acquire more and more strength. To feel one's faculties unfolding and truth expanding the soul is one of life's sublimest experiences."¹³

As a hopeless cripple, William Ernest Henley courageously looked beyond his outward physical condition to triumph in his heart and mind when he wrote "Invictus":

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance,
I have not winced nor cried aloud:
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed. . . .

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the
scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.¹⁴

Brethren, I testify with all my heart and soul that through the power of self-mastery we will inherit the blessings our Heavenly Father has for his faithful sons. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Ether 12:27.
2. In Angela Partington, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 4th ed. (1996), 368.

3. 2 Corinthians 12:7.
4. *The Meaning of Service* (1920), 83.
5. "Sir Galahad," lines 3-4.
6. *Hamlet*, act 3, scene 4, lines 166-71.
7. Roderick L. Cameron, *Tenacity*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year (1 Dec. 1964), 3.
8. David C. Call, *Success—Spiritual and Temporal*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year (30 Nov. 1965), 5-6.
9. Cameron, *Tenacity*, 2.
10. "Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow," *Hymns*, no. 242.
11. In Conference Report, Apr. 1900, 61.
12. See Cameron, *Tenacity*, 2-3.
13. *Gospel Ideals* (1953), 390.
14. "Invictus. In Mem. R.T.H.B.," as quoted in *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 332.

The choir and congregation sang "Ye Elders of Israel."

President Hinckley

It will now be our pleasure to hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

President Thomas S. Monson

Priesthood holders can make a difference

One of my most vivid memories was attending priesthood meeting as a newly ordained deacon and singing the opening hymn, "Come, all ye sons of God who have received the priesthood."¹ Tonight, to the capacity audience assembled in this magnificent Conference Center and in chapels worldwide, I echo the spirit of that special hymn and say to you, "Come, all ye sons of God who have received the

priesthood, let us consider our callings, let us reflect on our responsibilities, let us determine our duty, and let us follow Jesus Christ our Lord."

While we may differ in age, in custom, or in nationality, we are united as one in our priesthood callings.

As bearers of the priesthood, we have been placed on earth in troubled times. We live in a complex world, with currents of conflict everywhere to be found. Po-

litical machinations ruin the stability of nations, despots grasp for power, and segments of our society seem forever down-trodden, deprived of opportunity, and left with a feeling of failure.

We who have been ordained to the priesthood of God can make a difference. When we qualify for the help of the Lord, we can build boys. We can mend men. We can accomplish miracles in His holy service. Our opportunities are without limit.

We must be worthy to receive God's help

Though the task seems large, we are strengthened by this truth: "The greatest force in this world today is the power of God as it works through man." If we are on the Lord's errand, we are entitled to the Lord's help. That divine help, however, is predicated upon our worthiness. To sail safely the seas of mortality, to perform a human rescue mission, we need the guidance of that eternal mariner—even the great Jehovah. We reach out, we reach up to obtain heavenly help.

Are our reaching hands clean? Are our yearning hearts pure? Looking backward in time through the pages of history, a lesson on worthiness is gleaned from the words of the dying King Darius. "Darius, . . . through the proper rites had been recognized as legitimate King of Egypt; his rival Alexander [the Great] had been declared . . . legitimate Son of Amon—he too was Pharaoh. . . . Alexander[, finding] the defeated Darius on the point of death . . . , laid his hands upon his head to heal him, commanding him to arise and resume his kingly power, . . . concluding . . . : 'I swear unto thee, Darius, by all the gods that I do these things truly and without faking. . . .' [Darius] replied with a gentle rebuke: 'Alexander my boy . . . do you think you can touch heaven with those hands of yours?'"²

Removing the barnacles of sin

An inspiring lesson is learned from a "Viewpoint" article which appeared some time ago in the *Church News*. May I quote:

"To some it may seem strange to see ships of many nations loading and unloading cargo along the docks at Portland, Ore. That city is 100 miles from the ocean. Getting there involves a difficult, often turbulent passage over the bar guarding the Columbia River and a long trip up the Columbia and Willamette Rivers.

"But ship captains like to tie up at Portland. They know that as their ships travel the seas, a curious saltwater shellfish called a barnacle fastens itself to the hull and stays there for the rest of its life, surrounding itself with a rocklike shell. As more and more [of these] barnacles attach themselves, they increase the ship's drag, slow its progress, decrease its efficiency.

"Periodically, the ship must go into dry dock, where with great effort the barnacles are chiseled or scraped off. It's a difficult, expensive process that ties up the ship for days.

"But not if the captain can get his ship to Portland. Barnacles can't live in fresh water. There, in the sweet, fresh waters of the Willamette or Columbia, the barnacles [die and some] fall away, [while those that remain are easily removed. Thus,] the ship returns to its task lightened and renewed.

"Sins are like those barnacles. Hardly anyone goes through life without picking up some. They increase the drag, slow our progress, decrease our efficiency. Unrepented, building up one on another, they can eventually sink us.

"In His infinite love and mercy, our Lord has provided a harbor where, through repentance, our barnacles fall

away and are forgotten. With our souls lightened and renewed, we can go efficiently about our work and His.”³

We are on the Lord's errand

The priesthood represents a mighty army of righteousness—even a royal army. We are led by a prophet of God, even President Gordon B. Hinckley. In supreme command is our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Our marching orders are clear. They are concise. Matthew describes our challenge in these words from the Master:

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”⁴

“And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them.”⁵

The call to serve has ever characterized the work of the Lord. It rarely comes at a convenient time. It prompts humility; it invites prayer; it inspires commitment. The call came—to Kirtland. Revelations followed. The call came—to Missouri. Persecution prevailed. The call came—to Nauvoo. Prophets died. The call came—to the basin of the Great Salt Lake. Hardship beckoned.

That long journey, made under such difficult circumstances, was a trial of faith. But faith forged in the furnace of trials and tears is marked by trust and testimony. Only God can count the sacrifice; only He can measure the sorrow; only He can know the hearts of those who serve Him—then and now.

Lessons from the past can quicken our memories, touch our lives, and direct our actions. We are prompted to pause and remember that divinely given promise: “Wherefore, . . . ye are on the

Lord's errand; and whatever ye do according to the will of the Lord is the Lord's business.”⁶

Befriending Mrs. Shinas

Many in this vast audience of priesthood bearers are holders of the Aaronic Priesthood—even deacons, teachers, and priests. Young men, some lessons in life are learned from your parents, while others you learn in school or in church. There are, however, certain moments when you know our Heavenly Father is doing the teaching and you are His student. The thoughts we think, the feelings we feel—even the deeds we do in boyhood—can affect our lives forever.

When I was a deacon, I loved baseball. In fact, I still do. I had a fielder's glove inscribed with the name *Mel Ott*. He was the premier player of my day. My friends and I would play ball in a small alleyway behind the houses where we lived. Our playing field was cramped, but all right, provided you hit straightaway to center field. However, if you hit the ball to the right of center, disaster was at the door. Here lived Mrs. Shinas, who, from her kitchen window, would watch us play; and as soon as the ball rolled to her porch, her large dog would retrieve the ball and present it to her as she opened the door. Into her house Mrs. Shinas would return and add the ball to the many she had previously confiscated. She was our nemesis, the destroyer of our fun—even the bane of our existence.

None of us had a good word for Mrs. Shinas, but we had plenty of bad words for her. None of us would speak to her, and she never spoke to us. She was hampered by a stiff leg which impaired her walking and must have caused her great pain. She and her husband had no children, lived secluded lives, and rarely came out of their house.

This private war continued for some time—perhaps two years—and then an

inspired thaw melted the ice of winter and brought a springtime of good feelings to the stalemate.

One evening as I performed my daily task of watering our front lawn, holding the nozzle of the hose in the hand as was the style at that time, I noticed that Mrs. Shinas's lawn was dry and beginning to turn brown. I honestly don't know, brethren, what came over me, but I took a few more minutes and, with our hose, watered her lawn. I continued to do this throughout the summer, and then when autumn came I hosed her lawn free of leaves as I did ours and stacked the leaves in piles at the street's edge to be gathered. During the entire summer I had not seen Mrs. Shinas. We boys had long since given up playing ball in the alleyway. We had run out of baseballs and had no money to buy more.

Early one evening, Mrs. Shinas's front door opened, and she beckoned for me to jump the small fence and come to her front porch. This I did. As I approached her, she invited me into her living room, where I was asked to sit in a comfortable chair. She treated me to cookies and milk. Then she went to the kitchen and returned with a large box filled with baseballs and softballs, representing several seasons of her confiscation efforts. The filled box was presented to me. The treasure, however, was not to be found in the gift but rather in her words. I saw for the first time a smile come across the face of Mrs. Shinas, and she said, "Tommy, I want you to have these baseballs, and I want to thank you for being kind to me." I expressed my own gratitude to her and walked from her home a better boy than when I entered. No longer were we enemies. Now we were friends. The Golden Rule had again succeeded.

Prepare this generation of missionaries

Fathers, bishops, quorum advisers—yours is the responsibility to prepare this

generation of missionaries, to quicken in the hearts of these deacons, teachers, and priests not only an awareness of their obligation to serve but also a vision of the opportunities and blessings which await them through a mission call. The work is demanding, the impact everlasting. This is no time for "summer soldiers" in the army of the Lord.

Each missionary who goes forth in response to a sacred call becomes a servant of the Lord, whose work this truly is. Do not fear, young men, for He will be with you. He never fails. He has promised: "I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up."⁷

Brethren, we have no way of knowing when our privilege to extend a helping hand will unfold before us. The road to Jericho each of us travels bears no name, and the weary traveler who needs our help may be one unknown. Altogether too frequently the recipient of kindness shown fails to express his feelings, and we are deprived of a glimpse of greatness and a touch of tenderness that motivates us to go and do likewise.

The Lord's grace will help us succeed

Two thousand years ago, Jesus of Nazareth sat by a well in Samaria and talked there to a woman:

"Jesus . . . said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

"But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."⁸

Should there be anyone who feels he is too weak to change the onward and downward course of his life, or should there be those who fail to resolve to do better because of that greatest of fears, the fear of failure, there is no more comforting assurance to be had than the

words of the Lord: "My grace," said He, "is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them."⁹

Through humble prayer, diligent preparation, and faithful service, we can succeed in our sacred callings.

Be pure vessels in the Lord's service

Remember how the captains of oceangoing vessels burdened by the weight of barnacles set a course to the fresh waters of the Columbia and Willamette Rivers to rid themselves of these impediments of progress? Let us, in our own lives and in our service in the Lord's work, shed the barnacles of doubt, laziness, fear, and sin by plying the living waters of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We know their names: faith, prayer, charity, obedience, and love—to identify but a few. The lighthouse of the Lord Jesus Christ marks the way. His beacon light will guide our course to celestial glory.

May we be wise mariners as we go forth on such a voyage. Let us be pure vessels before the Lord. Let us recognize and respond to the needs of the widow; the cry of the child; the plight of the unemployed; the burden of the sick, the confined, the aged, the poor, the hungry, the lame, and the forgotten. They are remembered by our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. May you and I follow Their divine examples. Heavenly peace will then be our blessing, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. "Come, All Ye Sons of God," *Hymns*, no. 322.

2. Quoted in Hugh Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt* (1981), 192.
3. "Harbor of Forgiveness," *Church News*, 30 Jan. 1988, 16.
4. Matthew 28:19–20.
5. Mark 16:20.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 64:29.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.
8. John 4:13–14.
9. Ether 12:27.

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us.

We remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow.

Daylight saving time begins tomorrow at 2:00 A.M. We encourage you to move your clocks ahead one hour before you go to bed this evening. But don't go to bed and then get up at 2:00 to move the clock.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express our appreciation to the members of the Tabernacle Choir, joined by returned missionaries, for the beautiful music they have provided this evening.

Following my remarks, we will conclude this session with the choir singing "Beautiful Savior." The benediction will then be offered by Elder E. Ray Bateman of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

It now becomes my pleasure to share with you a few remarks. First, thank you for being here. I've never seen anything like this. I should have brought my binoculars to see how you in the upper balcony look. I've counted five empty seats in this entire hall. What a pleasure it is to be here.

The wonder of the priesthood

My brethren, what a wonderful thing is the priesthood of God. There is nothing to compare with it. It is received only by the laying on of hands by those in authority to bestow it. In this dispensation, that bestowal goes back to John the Baptist and the Lord's Apostles Peter, James, and John. They came to earth and physically laid their hands on the heads of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and with audible voices spoke words of bestowal of this wondrous power. Since then every man who has received it has done so through the laying on of hands by one who received it in turn in the same manner, traced back to its original bestowal.

It is classless. Every worthy man, regardless of nationality, ethnic background, or any other factor, is eligible to receive the priesthood. His obedience to the commandments of God becomes the determining factor. Its bestowal is based only on worthiness before the Lord.

With it comes the right and the authority to govern in the Church of Christ. I recall the experiences I had long ago when I was a member of the Council of the Twelve. I attended a stake conference where the president was a man of wealth and affluence. He was very successful by the standards of the world. He lived in a magnificent home. He met me at the airport in a beautiful car. We had lunch at a first-class restaurant. And yet he was humble in his office, anxious to learn, and ever willing to do the right

thing in administering the affairs of his stake.

I subsequently went to another conference. The president met me in a car that had seen many seasons. We stopped at a fast-food place for a bite to eat. His home was extremely modest—neat and clean and quiet but not richly furnished. He was a carpenter by trade. He had none of the fancy things of the world. He, too, was a wonderful stake president doing his duty in a remarkable way. He was excellent in every respect.

Such is the wonder of this priesthood. Wealth is not a factor. Education is not a factor. The honors of men are not a factor. The controlling factor is acceptability unto the Lord.

Revelation in calling stake presidents

All of the Authorities who are here tonight could testify that in the reorganization of stakes they have had remarkable and inspiring experiences. I recall being assigned to reorganize a stake about 40 years ago. The president had suddenly died. The Brethren asked me to go down and speak at the funeral and reorganize the stake. I had never done this before. I was new as a General Authority. I was to be all alone.

When I arrived I was taken to another town, where I participated in the funeral service. I asked all of the stake officers and the bishops to remain after the service and announced that a reorganization of the stake would take place the next evening.

I asked the mission president to sit with me as I interviewed the brethren, none of whom I knew. We interviewed late into the evening. I soon discovered there were problems in the stake. There were divisive feelings. When we were all through, I said to the mission president, "I am not satisfied. Are there not others?" He said, "I know of only one

man whom we have not interviewed. He moved here rather recently on a transfer in his company. He is the second counselor in a bishopric. I do not know him well. He resides in another city."

I said, "Let's go see him." We drove and went to the hotel where I would be staying for the night. Here I was, having interviewed all of these brethren and having not found one that I considered worthy to preside and having scheduled the reorganization for the next evening.

We arrived late at the hotel. I called the man; a sleepy voice answered the phone. I said that I wished to see him that evening. I apologized for calling him so late. He said, "I've just gone to bed, but I'll put on my clothes and come."

He came to the hotel. The conversation that followed was most interesting. He was a graduate of BYU in petroleum geology. He worked for a big oil company. He had served elsewhere in positions of responsibility in the Church. He knew the program of the Church. He had served a mission. He knew the gospel. He was mature in the Church. And the territory for which he was responsible as an employee of the oil company was exactly the same as the territory of the stake. I told him we would telephone him in the morning and excused him.

The mission president went on his way, and I went to bed.

At about three o'clock the next morning I awoke. Doubts began to flood my mind. This man was almost a total stranger to the people of the stake. I got out of bed and got on my knees and pleaded with the Lord for direction. I did not hear a voice, but I had a very distinct impression that said, "I told you who should be stake president. Why do you continue to ask?"

Ashamed of myself for troubling the Lord again, I went to bed and fell asleep. I phoned the man early the next morning and issued to him a call to serve as president of the stake. I asked him to select counselors.

That evening when people gathered for the meeting, there was much speculation as to who would be the stake president, but no one even thought of this man. When I announced his name, people looked at one another for a clue to discovering who he was. I had him come to the stand. I announced his counselors and had them come to the stand.

Even though they did not know him, the people sustained him. Things began to happen in that stake. The people had known for a long time that they needed a stake center, but they had been uncertain and argumentative as to where it should go. He went to work and within 18 months had a beautiful new stake center ready for dedication. He unified the stake. He traveled up and down, meeting the people and extending his love to them. That stake, which had grown tired, came to life and literally bubbled with new enthusiasm. It stands as a shining star in the large constellation of stakes in this Church.

Brethren, I can testify to you that revelation from the Lord is made manifest in the naming of a stake president. I once spoke in this meeting on bishops, and tonight I wish to say a few words about stake presidents.

The office of stake president

The office came into the Church in 1832. Joseph Smith, the President of the Church, was also stake president. When a new stake was organized in Missouri in 1834, this pattern was changed, with officers drawn from the ranks of the priesthood.

This is an office that came of revelation. The organization of a stake represents the creation of a family of wards and branches. The program of the Church has become increasingly complex, and the demands upon stake presidencies have grown. Smaller stakes have been created. We now have 2,550 stakes in the Church, with more approved for organization.

The president of the stake is the officer called under revelation to stand between the bishops of wards and the General Authorities of the Church. It is a most important responsibility. He is trained by the General Authorities, and in turn he trains the bishops.

It is most interesting to me that we have 17,789 wards in the Church with a bishop in each. They are scattered over the earth. Their members speak various languages. And yet they are all alike. You may attend Sunday meetings in Singapore or Stockholm, and the service will be the same. Think of the confusion we would have if every bishop followed his own inclinations. The Church would literally fall apart in a very short time.

The stake president serves as an adviser to the bishops. Every bishop knows that when he has to deal with a difficult problem, there is one readily available to whom he may go to share his burden and receive counsel.

A secondary measure of worthiness

He provides a secondary measure of safety in determining those worthy to go to the house of the Lord. Bishops are very close to their people. They live with them as neighbors. Sometimes they do not have the heart to refuse to grant a recommend even though the patron's worthiness may be somewhat in question. But the stake president also interviews. Until Wilford Woodruff's time, the President of the Church signed all temple recommends. But the burden became too heavy, and stake presidents were given the responsibility. They have done a tremendous work in this regard.

The president likewise becomes a second screen in determining the worthiness of those who go out to represent the Church in the mission field. He too interviews the candidate, and only when he is satisfied of his or her worthiness does he

endorse the recommendation. He likewise has been given authority to set apart those called on missions and to extend releases when they have completed their service.

Responsibility for Church discipline

Most importantly, he is the principal disciplinary officer of the stake. The duties of a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood might be applied to the president of the stake. He "is to watch over the [entire stake], and be with and strengthen [the members];

"And see that there is no iniquity in the church, neither hardness with each other, neither lying, backbiting, nor evil speaking;

"And see that the church meet together often, and also see that all the members do their duty" (D&C 20:53-55).

He carries the very heavy responsibility of seeing that the doctrine taught in the stake is kept pure and unsullied. It is his duty to see that there is no false doctrine that is taught nor false practice that occurs. If there be any Melchizedek Priesthood holder out of line, or any other person for that matter, under some circumstances, he is to counsel with them, and if the individual persists in his or her practice, then the president is obliged to take action. He will summon the offender to appear before a disciplinary council, where action may be taken to assign a probationary period or to disfellowship or excommunicate him or her from the Church.

This is a most onerous and unwelcome task, but the president must face up to it without fear or favor. All of this is done in harmony with the direction of the Spirit and as set forth in section 102 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

Then subsequently he must do all he can to labor with and bring back in due time the one who was disciplined.

Confidence in stake presidents

All of this and much more comprise his responsibilities. It follows, therefore, that his own life must be exemplary before his people.

What a wonderful body of men comprise the stake presidents of this Church. Chosen by inspiration, they are most diligent in the pursuit of their duties. They are men of ability. They are men well schooled in the doctrines and practices of the Church. They are men of great faith. They are men who are called of the Lord to preside in the areas of their jurisdiction.

I think I know a little about the office of stake president. My grandfather was one when there were only 25 stakes in the Church. My father presided for years over the largest stake in the Church. I served as a stake president before being called as a General Authority. And one of my sons has just been released after nine years of service as a stake president. This represents four generations serving in this capacity.

I have total confidence in the men who fill this office. Their duties are numerous, their responsibilities great. They recognize their own inadequacy, and I know that they pray for guidance and help. I know they study the scriptures to find answers. I know they place this work first in their lives. Because we have such confidence in them, we urge local members that they not seek out General Authorities to counsel with and bless them. Their stake presidents have been called under the same inspiration under which the General Authorities were called.

Prayer for stake presidents

I pray for these, my beloved brethren, that the Spirit of the Lord will rest

upon them. I pray that they may be inspired in their words, in their thoughts, in their actions. I hope their homes will be places of peace and love and harmony where they will draw inspiration for their work. I pray they will magnify and bless their wives and children, being the kind of husbands and fathers who will stand as examples for all of the people of their stakes. I hope that whatever their vocations, they may pursue them with honor and integrity, that they may be workmen worthy of their hire. I hope they will so live that they will merit the respect of those not only of our faith but of others with whom they may be associated. And when they have served well over a period of years and led their people in honor and love, the time will come that they are to be released. Their only reward will be the love of the people and the confidence of their Brethren.

There is no other office in the Church quite like this office. The president of the stake is close enough to the people to know them and love them. And yet, with his counselors, he stands aloof enough to deal objectively according to the will and pattern of the Lord.

I pray that the rich and wondrous blessings of the Lord may be poured out upon these devoted brethren that they may be men of faith, men of inspired judgment, men of patience, men who love the Lord and who love His people. May they be happy, and may they find their reward in the satisfaction of having served well is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Beautiful Savior."

Elder E. Ray Bateman offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 170th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, April 2, 2000. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist. To begin the session, the choir sang "Let Earth's Inhabitants Rejoice." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My dear brothers and sisters, we welcome each of you to this, the fourth general session of the 170th annual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, the Internet, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders, and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Let Earth's Inhabitants Rejoice" and will now favor us with "Press Forward, Saints." Following the singing, the invocation will be given by Elder Rex D. Pinegar of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Press Forward, Saints."

Elder Rex D. Pinegar offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

We will now be pleased to hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

President Thomas S. Monson

One day during the personal ministry of our Savior, He took Peter, James, and John "up into an high mountain . . .

"And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

"And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.

"Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here."¹

Today, on this historic occasion, we assemble in this magnificent Conference Center and in the overflow facilities on Temple Square and throughout the world.

Tears moisten our eyes and gratitude fills our hearts as we echo the title of a beautiful hymn, "Thanks Be to God!"²

The erection of this edifice has long been in the planning stage. We have needed a much larger building to accommodate those who attend conference and other activities throughout the year. Workmen with finely honed skills have labored with their hearts and hands to provide a structure worthy of His divine approbation, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."³

The Savior's references to home building

When Jesus ministered among men at a time long ago and a place far away, He often spoke in parables, in language the people best understood. Oftentimes

He referred to home building in relationship to the lives of those who listened. Wasn't He frequently known as "the carpenter's son"? He declared, "Every . . . house divided against itself shall not stand."⁴ Later He cautioned, "Behold, mine house is a house of order, saith the Lord God, and not a house of confusion."⁵

In a revelation given through the Prophet Joseph Smith at Kirtland, Ohio, on December 27, 1832, the Master counseled, "Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God."⁶

Where could any of us locate a more suitable blueprint whereby he or she could wisely and properly build a house to personally occupy throughout eternity?

Building our eternal homes

In a very real sense, we are builders of eternal houses. We are apprentices to the trade, not skilled craftsmen. We need divine help if we are to build successfully. The words of instruction provided by the Apostle Paul give the assurance we need: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"⁷

When we remember that each of us is literally a spirit son or daughter of God, we will not find it difficult to approach our Heavenly Father in prayer. He appreciates the value of this raw material which we call life. "Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God."⁸ His pronouncement finds lodgment in our souls and inspires purpose in our lives.

There is a Teacher who will guide our efforts if we will but place our faith in Him—even the Lord Jesus Christ. He invites us:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

"For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."⁹

It was said of Jesus that He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."¹⁰ Do we have the determination to do likewise? One line of holy writ contains a tribute to our Lord and Savior, of whom it was said, "[He] went about doing good."¹¹

Paul, in his epistle to his beloved Timothy, outlined a way whereby we could become our better selves and, at the same time, provide assistance to others who silently ponder and then audibly ask the question, "How can I [find my way], except some man should guide me?"¹²

The answer, given by Paul to Timothy, provides an inspired charge to each of us. Let us take heed of his wise counsel: "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."¹³

Let us examine this solemn instruction which, in a very real sense, is given to us.

Be an example in word

First, be an example in *word*. "Let your words tend to edifying one another,"¹⁴ said the Lord.

Do we remember the counsel of a favorite Sunday School hymn?

Oh, the kind words we give shall in memory live
And sunshine forever impart.
Let us oft speak kind words to each other;
Kind words are sweet tones of the heart.¹⁵

Consider the observation of Mary Boyson Wall, who celebrated her 105th

birthday a few years ago. She married Don Harvey Wall in the Salt Lake Temple in 1913. They celebrated their 81st wedding anniversary shortly before Don died at age 103. In a *Church News* article "she attributed longevity in life and in their marriage to speaking kind words. She said, 'I think that helped us through because we tried to help each other and not say unkind words to each other.'"¹⁶

Be an example in conversation

Second, be an example in *conversation*. In a general conference in October 1987, President Gordon B. Hinckley declared: "Foul talk defiles the man who speaks it. If you have the habit, how do you break it? You begin by making a decision to change. The next time you are prone to use words you know to be wrong, simply stop. Keep quiet or say what you have to say in a different way."¹⁷

François de la Rochefoucauld observed, "One of the reasons why so few people are to be found who seem sensible and pleasant in conversation is that almost everybody is thinking about what he wants to say himself, rather than about answering clearly what is said to him."

Be an example in charity

Third, be an example in *charity*.

From Corinthians comes the beautiful truth "Charity never faileth."¹⁸

Satisfying to the soul is the ready response the Church has made to disasters of nature, such as in Mozambique, Madagascar, Venezuela, and many other locations. Frequently we have arrived first on the scene following such disasters, and with the most help. There are other organizations which likewise respond in a generous fashion.

What is charity? Moroni, in writing a few of the words of his father, Mormon, recorded, "Charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever."¹⁹

One who exemplified charity in his life was President George Albert Smith. Immediately following World War II, the Church had a drive to amass warm clothing to ship to suffering Saints in Europe. Elder Harold B. Lee and Elder Marion G. Romney took President George Albert Smith to Welfare Square in Salt Lake City to view the results. They were impressed by the generous response of the membership of the Church. They watched President Smith observing the workers as they packaged this great volume of donated clothing and shoes. They saw tears running down his face. After a few moments, President George Albert Smith removed his own new overcoat and said, "Please ship this also."

The Brethren said to him, "No, President, no; don't send that; it's cold and you need your coat."

But President Smith would not take it back; and so his coat, with all the others, was sent to Europe, where the nights were long and dark and food and clothing were scarce. Then the shipments arrived. Joy and thanksgiving were expressed aloud, as well as in secret prayer.

Be an example in spirit

Fourth, be an example in *spirit*. The Psalmist wrote, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."²⁰

As a 17-year-old I enlisted in the United States Navy and attended boot camp in San Diego, California. For the first three weeks, one felt as though the navy were trying to kill rather than train him on how to stay alive.

I shall ever remember the first Sunday at San Diego. The chief petty officer said to us, "Today everybody goes to church." We then lined up in formation on the drill ground. The petty officer shouted, "All of you who are Catholics—you meet in Camp Decatur. Forward, march! And don't come back until three!"

A large number marched out. He then said, "All of you who are of the Jewish faith—you meet in Camp Henry. Forward, march! And don't come back until three!" A smaller contingent moved out. Then he said, "The rest of you Protestants meet in the theaters in Camp Faragut. Forward, march! And don't come back until three o'clock!"

There flashed through my mind the thought, "Monson, you're not Catholic. You're not Jewish. You're not a Protestant." I elected to stand fast. It seemed as though hundreds of men marched by me. Then I heard the sweetest words which the petty officer ever uttered in my presence. He said, "And what do you men call yourselves?" He used the plural—*men*. This was the first time I knew that anyone else was standing behind me on that drill ground. In unison we said, "We're Mormons." He scratched his head, an expression of puzzlement on his face, and said, "Well, go and find somewhere to meet—and don't come back until three o'clock." We marched away. One could almost count cadence to the rhyme learned in Primary:

Dare to be a Mormon;
Dare to stand alone.
Dare to have a purpose firm,
And dare to make it known.

Be an example in faith

Fifth, be an example in *faith*.

President Stephen L. Richards, speaking of faith, declared: "The recognition of power higher than man himself does not in any sense debase him. If in his faith he ascribes beneficence and high purpose to the power which is superior to himself, he envisions a higher destiny and nobler attributes for his kind and is stimulated and encouraged in the struggle of existence. . . . He must seek believing, praying, and hoping that he will find. No such sincere, prayerful effort will go un-

required—that is the very constitution of the philosophy of faith."²¹ Divine favor will attend those who humbly seek it.

Minnie Louise Haskins set forth this principle in a lovely poem: "I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year: 'Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.' And he replied: 'Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.'"²²

Be an example in purity

Finally, be an example in *purity*.

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?

"He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

"He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation."²³

As President David O. McKay observed: "The safety of our nation depends upon the purity and strength of the home; and I thank God for the teachings of the . . . Church in relation to home building, and the impression that kind parents have made, that the home must be the most sacred place in the world. Our people are home-builders, and they are taught everywhere, from childhood to old age, that the home should be kept pure and safe from the evils of the world."²⁴

Example of President Francis Winters

Many years ago I attended a stake conference in Star Valley, Wyoming, where the stake presidency was reorganized. The stake president who was being released, E. Francis Winters, had served faithfully for the lengthy term of 23 years. Though modest by nature and circumstance, he had been a perpetual pillar of strength to everyone in the val-

ley. On the day of the stake conference, the building was filled to overflowing. Each heart seemed to be saying a silent *thank-you* to this noble leader who had given so unselfishly of his life for the benefit of others.

As I stood to speak, I was prompted to do something I had not done before, nor have I done so since. I stated how long Francis Winters had presided in the stake; then I asked all whom he had blessed or confirmed as children to stand and remain standing. Then I asked all those persons whom President Winters had ordained, set apart, personally counseled, or blessed to please stand. The outcome was electrifying. Every person in the audience rose to his or her feet. Tears flowed freely—tears which communicated better than could words the gratitude of tender hearts. I turned to President and Sister Winters and said, “We are witnesses today of the prompting of the Spirit. This vast throng reflects not only individual feelings but also the gratitude of God for a life well lived.” No person who was in the congregation that day will forget how he or she felt when we witnessed the language of the Spirit of the Lord.

Here, in Francis Winters, was “an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”²⁵

True to the faith that our parents have cherished,
True to the truth for which martyrs have perished,
To God’s command,
Soul, heart, and hand,
Faithful and true we will ever stand.²⁶

That each of us may do so is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Matthew 17:1–4.

2. Felix Mendelssohn, “Thanks Be to God!” *Elijah*.
3. Matthew 25:21.
4. Matthew 12:25.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 132:8.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 88:119.
7. 1 Corinthians 3:16.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10.
9. Matthew 11:28–30.
10. Luke 2:52.
11. Acts 10:38.
12. Acts 8:31.
13. 1 Timothy 4:12.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 136:24.
15. “Let Us Oft Speak Kind Words,” *Hymns*, no. 232.
16. Quoted in “Lives of Service,” *Church News*, 21 Sept. 1996, 10.
17. In Conference Report, Oct. 1987, 57–58; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 47.
18. 1 Corinthians 13:8.
19. Moroni 7:47.
20. Psalm 51:10.
21. In Conference Report, Oct. 1937, 35, 38.
22. “God Knows,” in Angela Partington, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 4th ed. (1996), 328.
23. Psalm 24:3–5.
24. In Conference Report, Apr. 1909, 66.
25. 1 Timothy 4:12.
26. “True to the Faith,” *Hymns*, no. 254.

The choir sang “How Great the Wisdom and the Love.”

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us, followed by the choir singing “How Great the Wisdom and the Love.”

It will now be our pleasure to hear from Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Earl C. Tingey of the Presidency of the Seventy.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

I feel privileged to be with you on this historic occasion. For me, this magnificent Conference Center, with walls of enduring granite, is a symbol of a great latter-day work—the stone that Daniel saw, “cut out of the mountain without hands”¹ to stand forever as the kingdom of God. Whether you are here in person or participating in other locations, I commend you for your choice to be part of this historic general conference and pray that the Lord will bless you for your faithfulness.

Finding a safe harbor

More than 60 years ago I served as a missionary in Austria and Switzerland. It was a challenging but wonderful time. I grew to love the people of that area of the world and felt reluctant to leave them. But my term of service ended in late August of 1939, and I made preparations to sail home.

After a long journey across the Atlantic Ocean, which was hazardous at that time because of the war, I rejoiced when I saw that wonderful beacon of freedom and democracy, the Statue of Liberty. I cannot express to you my relief when we finally reached that safe harbor.

I imagine I felt something of what the disciples of Jesus Christ felt on that day when they were with the Savior. They set sail upon the Sea of Galilee. The scriptures tell us that Jesus was weary, and He went to the back of the ship and fell asleep on a pillow.² Soon the skies darkened, and “there arose a great tempest in the sea, inasmuch that the ship was covered with the waves.”³ The storm raged. The disciples panicked. It seemed as though the boat would capsize, yet the Savior still slept. At last they could wait no longer, and they awakened Jesus. You can almost hear the anguish and despair

in their voices as they pleaded with their Master, “Carest thou not that we perish?”⁴

Finding peace amid threatening storms

Many today feel troubled and distressed; many feel that at any moment the ships of their lives could capsize or sink. It is to you who are looking for a safe harbor that I wish to speak today, you whose hearts are breaking, you who are worried or afraid, you who bear grief or the burdens of sin, you who feel no one is listening to your cries, you whose hearts are pleading, “Master, carest thou not that I perish?” To you I offer a few words of comfort and of counsel.

Be assured that there is a safe harbor. You can find peace amidst the storms that threaten you. Your Heavenly Father, who knows when even a sparrow falls, knows of your heartache and suffering. He loves you and wants the best for you. Never doubt this. While He allows all of us to make choices that may not always be for our own or even others’ well-being, and while He does not always intervene in the course of events, He has promised the faithful peace even in their trials and tribulations.

The prophet Alma tells us, “And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people.”⁵

Jesus comforts us when He said: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”⁶

Draw close to the Lord Jesus Christ. He bears a special love for those who suffer. He is the Son of God, an eternal king. In His mortal ministry He loved them and blessed them.

To the meek and discouraged, His every word was one of compassion and encouragement. To the sick, He brought a healing balm. Those who yearned for hope, who yearned for a caring touch, received it from the hand of this King of Kings, this Creator of ocean, earth, and sky.

Today Jesus the Christ stands at the right hand of our Heavenly Father. Do you suppose that today He is any less inclined to aid those who suffer, who are sick, or who appeal to the Father in prayer for succor?

See struggles as a temporary chrysalis

Be of good cheer. The Man of Galilee, the Creator, the Son of the Living God will not forget nor forsake those whose hearts are drawn to Him. I testify that the Man who suffered for mankind, who committed His life to healing the sick and comforting the disconsolate, is mindful of your sufferings, doubts, and heartaches.

"Then," the world would ask, "why does He sleep when the tempest rages all around me? Why does He not still this storm, or why would He let me suffer?"

Your answer may be found in considering a butterfly. Wrapped tightly in its cocoon, the developing chrysalis must struggle with all its might to break its confinement. The butterfly might think, "Why must I suffer so? Why cannot I simply, in the twinkling of an eye, become a butterfly?"

Such thoughts would be contrary to the Creator's design. The struggle to break out of the cocoon develops the butterfly so it can fly. Without that adversity, the butterfly would never have the strength to achieve its destiny. It would never develop the strength to become something extraordinary.

President James E. Faust explained that "into every life there come the pain-

ful, despairing days of adversity and buffeting. There seems to be a full measure of anguish, sorrow, and often heartbreak for everyone, including those who earnestly seek to do right and be faithful."⁷ And then the suggestion that the adversity we experience allows our souls to become like clay in the hands of the Master. "Trials and adversity," President Faust taught, "can be preparatory to becoming born anew."⁸

Adversity can strengthen and refine us. As with the butterfly, adversity is necessary to build character in people. Even when we are called to sail through troubled waters, we need to know the place of adversity in shaping our divine potential.

If only we would look beyond our present suffering and see our struggles as a temporary chrysalis. If only we would have the faith and trust in our Heavenly Father to see how, after a little season, we can emerge from our trials more refined and glorious.

Mortality is like learning to walk

What parent would say to a child, "Learning to walk is such a painful and difficult experience. You will stumble; you will most likely hurt yourself; you will cry many times when you fall. I will protect you from the struggle." I have watched our youngest grandson, Seth, as he was learning to walk. Through this process of gaining experience, he now walks with confidence. Could I have said to him, "Out of my love for you, I will save you from this"? If I had, because I could not bear to see him take a tumble at times, he may have never learned to walk. That is unthinkable for a loving parent or grandparent.

The child, if he or she is ever to walk, must pass through the stumbling and often painful process of learning. We encouraged Seth to learn through his experience. Yes, even knowing that the

process would be difficult, we knew that the freedom and joy of walking would outweigh any temporary pain or adversity.

My brothers and sisters, what is mortality if not a long process like learning to walk? We must learn to walk in the ways of the Lord.

You are stronger than you think. Your Heavenly Father, the Lord and Master of the universe, is your Creator. When I think of it, it makes my heart leap for joy. Our spirits are eternal, and eternal spirits have immeasurable capacity!

Our Father in Heaven does not wish us to cower. He does not want us to wallow in our misery. He expects us to square our shoulders, roll up our sleeves, and overcome our challenges.

That kind of spirit—that blend of faith and hard work—is the spirit we should emulate as we seek to reach a safe harbor in our own lives.

Others will help you

Brothers and sisters, you are not alone. In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints today, millions of people stand beside you. Those who follow the teachings and example of the Savior are “willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light; yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort.”⁹

The question Cain asked of the Lord, “Am I my brother’s keeper?”¹⁰ has been answered by prophets in these latter days. “Yes, we are our brothers’ keepers,” President Thomas S. Monson has said. When we work together to benefit those in need, “we eliminate the weakness of one person standing alone and substitute the strength of many serving together. While we may not be able to do everything, we can and must do something.”¹¹

Bishops, home teachers, visiting teachers, and members of priesthood quorums and Relief Societies and other auxiliary organizations all stand ready to help. The Savior’s teachings and the Church constitute our best safe harbor—yes, our most secure “refuge from the storm.”¹²

Of course, your brothers and sisters in the Church are not to solve your problems for you. It has been my experience that when we do for others what they can and ought to do for themselves, we often weaken rather than strengthen them. But your brothers and sisters will be at your side to strengthen you, encourage you, and help you.

As you overcome adversity in your life, you will become stronger. Then you will be better able to help others—those who are working, in their turn, to find a safe harbor from the storms that rage about them.

With faith, all things work for our good

When you feel tossed by the storms of life and when the waves rise and the winds howl, on those occasions it would be natural for you to cry in your heart, “Master, carest thou not that I perish?” When these times come, think back upon that day when the Savior awakened in the stern of the ship, rose up, and rebuked the storm. “Peace, be still.”¹³ He said.

At times we may be tempted to think that the Savior is oblivious to our trials. In fact, the reverse is true; it is we who need to be awakened in our hearts to His teachings.

Use your ingenuity, your strength, your might to resolve your challenges. Do all you can do and then leave the rest to the Lord. President Howard W. Hunter said: “If our lives and our faith are centered on Jesus Christ and his restored gospel, nothing can ever go permanently wrong. On the other hand, if our lives are not centered on the Savior and His teach-

ings, no other success can ever be permanently right."¹⁴

Living the gospel does not mean the storms of life will pass us by, but we will be better prepared to face them with serenity and peace. "Search diligently, pray always, and be believing," the Lord admonished, "and all things shall work together for your good, if ye walk up-rightly."¹⁵

The Savior is our solace and sanctuary

Draw close to the Lord Jesus Christ. Be of good cheer. Keep the faith. Doubt not. The storms will one day be stilled. Our beloved prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, has said: "We have nothing to fear. God is at the helm. . . . [And] He will shower down blessings upon those who walk in obedience to His commandments."¹⁶

In our own storms in life, the Savior is our solace and our sanctuary. If we seek peace, we must come unto Him. He Himself spoke this eternal truth when He said, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."¹⁷ When our souls are anchored in the safe harbor of the Savior, we can proclaim as did Paul: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."¹⁸

The Prophet Joseph Smith, who knew much about the storms of life, during one of his darkest moments cried in anguish: "[My] God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?"¹⁹ Even as he lifted up his voice, the serene comfort of the Lord came to him:

"Peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; and then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes."²⁰

Steer toward the light of the gospel

The gospel gives us that harbor of enduring safety and security. The living prophet and the apostles today are as lighthouses in the storm. Steer toward the light of the restored gospel and the inspired teachings of those who represent the Lord on earth.

I bear solemn testimony that Jesus is the living Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. He leads and directs His Church through our prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. If we live by the Savior's teachings, we will with surety find a safe harbor in this life and in the eternities to come. I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Daniel 2:45.
2. See Mark 4:38.
3. Matthew 8:24.
4. Mark 4:38.
5. Alma 7:11.
6. John 14:27.
7. In Conference Report, Apr. 1979, 77; or *Ensign*, May 1979, 53.
8. In Conference Report, Apr. 1979, 77; or *Ensign*, May 1979, 54.
9. Mosiah 18:8-9.
10. Moses 5:34.
11. "Our Brothers' Keepers," *Ensign*, June 1998, 33, 38.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 115:6.
13. Mark 4:39.
14. *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1997), 40.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 90:24.
16. In Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 95; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 71.
17. Matthew 11:30.
18. 2 Corinthians 4:8-9.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 121:1.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 121:7-8.

Elder Earl C. Tingey

The widows of Zion

I have entitled my talk "The Widows of Zion." The dictionary defines a widow as "a woman who has lost her husband by death and . . . has not remarried."¹

Some widows are young. Their husbands often have met an untimely death. If young children adorn their home, the young widow bears the sole responsibility for rearing them. She has an unanswered question: "Why has this happened to me?" Extreme loneliness is not unusual.

Other widows are older. Their husbands, following a lifetime of cherished companionship, have died of old age or ill health. Decades of loving memories, shared joy in rearing a noble family, and mutual service to Church and community are replaced by loneliness and feelings of being unneeded or unwanted. The question "How long must I wait before I can join my eternal companion?" remains unanswered. Their temple work may increase. Life often becomes more difficult. Living with family or in assisted-care facilities may replace a family home filled with a lifetime of memories.

Being alone is foreign to our sisters when they become widows. They want to be helpful and to contribute to the well-being of others. Many have limitations because of poor health. They want to remain faithful so they may one day join their eternal companions. They can teach us much about faith.

Caring and providing for widows

The doctrine of the Church is very clear regarding widows.

In the early Church, the leaders were chastised for neglecting their widows. "Seven men of honest report" were called to assist.²

Paul instructed the Saints to honor widows.³ He taught that anyone who provided "not for his own, and specially

for those of his own house, . . . hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."⁴

As Brigham Young organized the first pioneer trek to the valley of the Great Salt Lake in 1847, he counseled the Saints as follows:

"Let each company bear an equal proportion, according to the dividend of their property, in taking the poor, the widows, the fatherless, and the families of those who have gone into the army, that the cries of the widow and the fatherless come not up into the ears of the Lord against this people."⁵

I believe this effort of helping the widows cross the plains is one of the greatest modern examples of how we should care for widows.

Modern revelation reveals the order of the Church:

"Women have claim on their husbands for their maintenance, until their husbands are taken. . . . Children have claim upon their parents for their maintenance. . . .

"And after that, they have claim upon the church."⁶

The Doctrine and Covenants states further, "And the storehouse shall be kept by the consecrations of the church; and widows and orphans shall be provided for, as also the poor."⁷

The book of James contains one of the most beautiful descriptions of the doctrine of the Church regarding our responsibility as family and friends of widows: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."⁸

The term *widows* is used 34 times in the scriptures. In 23 of these passages, the term refers to widows and the fatherless. I believe the Lord has a tender feeling toward widows and the fatherless, or

orphans. He knows that they may have to rely more completely on Him than on others. Their prayers will be more personal and lasting, service to fellowmen more genuine, and faith greater.

The faith of widows in the scriptures

The faith of widows is legendary in scripture.

The widow of Zarephath showed her faith when she provided the prophet Elijah with a morsel of bread rather than using the last of her meal and oil to feed her son and herself and then die. The scriptures record:

"And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days.

"And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah."⁹

Perhaps symbolic of the trust widows have in the Lord is the phrase "and she went and did according to the saying of Elijah."

Anna, a widow of about 84 years who served continually in the temple, recognized the infant Jesus at His presentation in the temple.¹⁰

Perceiving the great faith of the widow of Nain, Jesus Christ raised her dead son, her only son, as he was being taken outside the gate of the city to be buried.¹¹

As an example of the true spirit of giving, the story of the widow's mite is forever immortalized as among the greatest of all the Savior's teachings:

"The people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.

"And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites. . . .

"And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:

"For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living."¹²

Encouragement and advice for widows

To you wonderful sisters who find yourselves as widows, please know that God loves you. You are the choice among the choice. I know whereof I speak. My own mother has been a widow for almost three years. She presides as a noble matriarch over an extended family of 247. My wife's mother, who is 97, remains faithful and continues to endure to the end, despite failing health. Dear sisters, your very lives, as an example of righteous living, continue to inspire younger family members to do better. You continue as teachers.

At some period in God's timetable, you will join your eternal companion and serve together, forever, in the great work in the spirit world.

For you young widows with ever-increasing family responsibilities, know that God is aware of your needs and that He will provide. Continue to exercise faith and good works. Faithful family and Church members will assist. Be willing to receive assistance from others as necessary. Your children will know that you provide them with a double measure of love. It is my testimony that our Heavenly Father will abundantly compensate your family with eternal blessings because of the goodness of your hearts.

Be caring and considerate of widows

To the family and friends of widows, God knows of your service and He may judge your works by how well you assist the widow. President James E. Faust once shared with the General Authorities a wonderful story about how neighbors and friends in a small farming community in central Utah treated the widows. They each had so many hours or minutes to take water turns to irrigate their home

gardens. They agreed that they could each take a little less water so that the widows of the neighborhood could have more water for their gardens.

I recently observed five elderly widows drive together to a Church meeting in a modest car. They entered the meeting together and sat down beside each other. They seemed to draw strength and protection from one another. I felt the goodness of their noble lives as I watched their tender association with one another in the twilight of their lives.

Brothers and sisters, the Lord loves widows. I know that the leaders of the Church are concerned about the welfare of widows. We members should care for and assist the widows within our family, home, ward, and neighborhood. I urge you young people—members of the Primary, youth, and young adults—to take the opportunity to assist and draw strength from the widows in your community.

May we be more caring and considerate to the widows of Zion is my humble prayer. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed. (1993), "widow," 1352.

2. See Acts 6:1–3.
3. See 1 Timothy 5:3.
4. 1 Timothy 5:8.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 136:8.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 83:2, 4–5.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 83:6.
8. James 1:27.
9. See 1 Kings 17:8–16.
10. See Luke 2:36–38.
11. See Luke 7:11–15.
12. Mark 12:41–44; see also Luke 21:1–4.

President Hinckley

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has spoken to us, followed by Elder Earl C. Tingey of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now sing "Israel, Israel, God Is Calling." Following the singing, Sister Mary Ellen Smoot, Relief Society general president, will address us. She will be followed by Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir and congregation sang "Israel, Israel, God Is Calling."

Sister Mary Ellen Smoot

We are all creators

We are all creators. We are walking along a bridge in time that crosses the threshold of a new millennium. This is an exciting and significant time. These are the days the prophets have foreseen. This is an age of faith, opportunity, and wonder.

I marvel when I think of this world so rich in beauty, so perfect in function. This world was created by Jesus Christ under the direction of our Heavenly Father. Creation is one of the characteristics that defines God. He takes matter

without form and molds it into stars, planets, and solar systems. "Worlds without number have I created," He tells us.¹

Brothers and sisters, we are children of God. Shouldn't we be about our Father's business? Shouldn't we be creators as well?

You might say, "I'm not creative." I'm here to tell you, you are. You are creators. Have you ever coaxed a smile from a baby? Have you ever taught someone to forgive? Have you helped someone learn to read? Prepared a family home evening? Organized a family reunion?

Possibly you were prompted to do something for a person you go visiting teaching or home teaching to that made a great difference in their lives. If you have done some of these things, you have been creative.

Create a tapestry of gospel living

The raw materials of creation are all around us. President David O. McKay taught: "Sculptors of life are we, with our uncarved souls before us. Every one of us is carving a soul."²

I believe that we carve souls—our own and others'—every day. Let's determine now to make those souls pure and chaste. Create homes filled with love and serenity. Relieve suffering. Create enduring testimonies of eternal truths in ourselves and others.

Recently I visited with the family of a young mother who died while giving birth to her fifth child. I expected anguish but found hope and determination. Her husband cherished the time they had together. Their children understood the plan of salvation and knew they could be with their mother again, forever. She had never been too busy for those most dear to her. At her young age, this sister had served as a Relief Society president, always putting her marriage and family first.

As I visited with the mother of the deceased woman, she remarked that her highest priority was to raise her daughters to be righteous women. Even though her daughter's life was cut short, this daughter created a tapestry of righteous gospel living in her home.

Together your general Relief Society presidency, under the direction of our priesthood leaders, created a declaration for our Relief Society sisters around the world. The declaration reminds us who we are; and home, family, and personal enrichment night has been set aside to develop these skills.

Create a tapestry of service

Do we recognize in our own lives the opportunities for creation that are there? Do we prize the gifts, talent, and choice spirits that God has given us? Do we share the creations of our hearts, minds, and hands with others?

Another mother and counselor in a stake Relief Society, though tremendous health problems threatened her, created a remarkable service project in her stake. Through fasting and prayer, miracles occurred, and the sisters of one stake created something extraordinary for others who were cold, hungry, and sick.

Who knows how many lives have been blessed because one woman refused to dwell on her afflictions and instead created the tapestry of service, a monument to the compassion and nobility of the human spirit.

Quilts for refugees in Kosovo

This story is repeated by tens of thousands of faithful members each year. In July of last year, the Presiding Bishopric distributed a letter suggesting that any who wanted to contribute to the relief of the suffering of the refugees in Kosovo could make quilts and send them to the Latter-day Saint Humanitarian Center for distribution. Our intent was to collect and ship 30,000 quilts.

We have received more than 125,000 quilts. These quilts have been sent not only to those suffering in Kosovo, but to disaster victims in Turkey, Venezuela, Mexico, and other countries, including Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

During this past year I was privileged to travel to Kosovo, where I personally wrapped many of these quilts around babies and women, grateful and teary eyed. We have found that because of this great organization, we can create in our own homes, teaching family, friends, and neighbors to serve and assist others clear

across the world. In the name of the Relief Society and humanitarian services of the Church, we can be creators. Isn't that exciting?

Dare to create

We each have to say to ourselves, "What will I create of my life? My time? My future?"

First, go where the Spirit directs. Be still and listen. Your Heavenly Father will guide you as you draw near to Him. Immerse yourself in the holy word of the prophets, both ancient and modern, and the Spirit will speak to you. Be patient, ask in faith, and you will receive guidance in your creative efforts.

Second, don't be paralyzed by fear of making mistakes. Thrust your hands into the clay of your lives and begin. I love how Rebekah of old responded to Abraham's servant who came in search of a wife for Isaac. Her answer was simple and direct: "I will go," she said.³

Rebekah could have refused. She could have told the servant to wait until she had the proper send-off, a new wardrobe, until she lost a few pounds, or until the weather was more promising. She could have said, "What's wrong with Isaac that he can't find a wife in all of Canaan?" But she didn't. She acted, and so should we.

The time for procrastination is over. Begin! Don't be afraid. Do the best you can. Of course you will make mistakes. Everyone does. Learn from them and move forward.

Third, support others along the way. Every person on this earth is unique. We all have varied interests, abilities, and skills. We are each at different levels physically, spiritually, and emotionally.

Finally, rejoice. Creation isn't drudgery. Creation flows from love. When we

do what we love, we rejoice along the way.

Create to overcome troubles and find joy

If you are unhappy, if you are feeling weary, troubled, or disillusioned, may I ask you to try something? Instead of dwelling on your troubles, focus instead on creating something remarkable, something of eternal significance. Nurture a testimony; strengthen a relationship; write a family history; go to the temple; serve.

Read the family proclamation and the Relief Society declaration; make a commitment to live those principles and celebrate.

We are a joyful people. We are participants walking across the bridge of time at one of the greatest moments in the history of this world. "This is not a time for dragging feet or stooped shoulders," President Gordon B. Hinckley has counseled. "Stop seeking out the storms and enjoy more fully the sunlight."⁴

As Latter-day Saints, I pray that we will be about our Father's business and create something more of our lives. No matter what our situations, we can pray as Isaiah, "O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand."⁵ May our work and glory be a reflection of His is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Moses 1:33.
2. In Francis M. Gibbons, *David O. McKay: Apostle to the World, Prophet of God* (1986), 288.
3. Genesis 24:58.
4. *Standing for Something: Ten Neglected Virtues That Will Heal Our Hearts and Homes* (2000), 101.
5. Isaiah 64:8.

Elder Henry B. Eyring

Millions of new callings each year

Hundreds of thousands of people in the last year were baptized and confirmed members of the Church. Each was given the opportunity of a call to serve. For them and for the Church, that experience will shape the future. Many of us remember the first time we gave a talk or conducted a meeting or knocked on the door of a home as an official visitor. My heart beats a little faster just thinking about it.

The new members may have been baptized only days or weeks before their call to serve. Some of them had never seen anyone perform the service that now was theirs. Because we have no professional clergy, the challenge of calls to serve came to more than the new members. In the last year, it is estimated that nearly two million Latter-day Saints received either a new call to be a shepherd or were given some new sheep to watch over. Just less than half of those called were youth, some as young as 12 or 13 years of age. More than 30,000 missionaries were called and set apart in that time. Most of them were less than 20 years of age. They went with only brief training and little experience.

Someone who knows organizations in the world might predict failure for a rapidly growing church depending on so many novice lay members. Even those called may well have felt some apprehension. And yet when they see through the eyes of faith the challenge as it really is, confidence replaces fear because they turn to God.

My message is first to those newly called to serve in the Church, then to those who called them, and finally to those they will serve.

Each calling is a trust from God

First, to the newly called: Confidence depends on your seeing the call for what it is. Your call to serve is not from human beings. It is a trust from God. And the service is not simply to perform a task. Whatever name it has, every call is an opportunity and an obligation to watch over and strengthen the children of our Heavenly Father. The Savior's work is to bring to pass their immortality and eternal life (see Moses 1:39). He called us to serve others so that we could strengthen our own faith as well as theirs. He knows that by serving Him we will come to know Him.

An inspired prophet saw service as the way we come to want what the Lord wants. He wrote, "For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?" (Mosiah 5:13).

Because you are called by Jesus Christ to His service, you may go forward with great confidence. First, you may be assured that He knows you and your capacity to grow. He has prepared you. Calls will stretch you, often at the start and always over their course, but He will give you the Holy Ghost to be your companion. The Holy Ghost will tell you what to do when your own abilities and efforts are not enough (see John 14:26). The Holy Ghost will prompt you to bear testimony with conviction. The Savior will let you feel the love He feels for those you serve. The call is an invitation to become like Him (see 3 Nephi 27:27).

You might well ask, "How will seeing my call that way make me more confident of success?" The answer is that seeing it in that lofty way will make it

more likely that you will go for help to the only source that is never-failing.

"You better do a lot of praying"

I saw a young man nearly overwhelmed by a new call not long ago. The Lord had inspired His servant to call him to be the president of a stake. The young man had never been a bishop. He had never served in a stake presidency. The stake had in it many men of greater maturity and experience.

He was humbled when he heard the call. His wife through tears said to the servant of the Lord who called him, "Are you sure?" Her husband said quietly that he would serve. His wife nodded her support, tears streaming down her face. As you might have done at such a time, he wanted to talk with his father, who was far away. He called him that afternoon on the telephone. His father has been a dairy farmer all his life. He raised the boy into a man through milking cows and letting his son observe him stop to talk with neighbors to see how they were doing. The next morning, in his first talk as a stake president, this is how he recounted the conversation with his father:

"Many of you that know me know I am a man of few words. I must have gotten that from my father. As I called him yesterday to let him know that I was being called as a stake president, his one response to me was, 'Well, you better do a lot of praying.' That was his counsel to me. What better counsel could he give?"

His father couldn't have done much better. And you can see why. The Lord is his only hope for success. Most of the help will come through the ministrations of the Holy Ghost. The Lord's servants cannot succeed without it. We can have the Holy Ghost as a companion only if we plead for it and if we qualify for it. And both require a lot of praying—praying with real faith in our Heavenly Father and in His Beloved Son and in the

Holy Ghost (see D&C 90:24; Articles of Faith 1:1).

To have the companionship of the Holy Ghost, we must be cleansed of sin (see D&C 50:29). That comes only through faith enough in Jesus Christ to repent and qualify for forgiveness (see D&C 3:20). And then we have to stay away from sin. That takes prayer, both frequent and fervent (see 3 Nephi 18:18).

The Lord's Prayer—a standard of service

"You better do a lot of praying" is good counsel for all of the Lord's servants, new or seasoned. It is what His wise servants do. They pray.

The disciples of Jesus Christ when He lived on the earth noticed that about Him. He was the Son of God. He was Jehovah. And yet He prayed often enough to His Heavenly Father that His disciples realized that they must know how to pray to be His servants. So they asked Him to teach them. You remember the record:

"And it came to pass, that, as [Jesus] was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

"And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. . . .

"And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil" (Luke 11:1-2, 4; see also Matthew 6:9-13).

We seldom use those exact words as we pray. But the words of that prayer are a perfect summary of what a servant of the Lord pleads for to qualify for the promise the Savior makes to all whom He calls: "And whoso receiveth you, there I will be also, for I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be

in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up" (D&C 84:88).

Think of that prayer as a standard of service. The prayer begins with reverence for our Heavenly Father. Then the Lord speaks of the kingdom and its coming. The servant with a testimony that this is the true Church of Jesus Christ feels joy in its progress and a desire to give his or her all to build it up.

The Savior Himself exemplified the standard set by these next words of the prayer: "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth" (Luke 11:2). That was His prayer in the extremity of offering the Atonement for all mankind and all the world (see Matthew 26:42). The faithful servant prays that even the apparently smallest task will be done as God would have it done. It makes all the difference to work and to pray for His success more than for our own.

Then the Savior set for us this standard of personal purity: "And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil" (Luke 11:4). The strengthening we are to give those we watch over comes from the Savior. We and they must forgive to be forgiven by Him (see Matthew 6:14). We and they can hope to remain clean only with His protection and with the change in our hearts that His Atonement makes possible. We need that change to have the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. Such a gift might seem too lofty and too distant for us and for those we serve. But a prophet of the Lord named Samuel called and anointed a young man named Saul. On that very day, Samuel promised Saul, "And the Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy . . . , and shalt be turned into another man" (1 Samuel 10:6).

That promise was fulfilled, not after many years or months or even days. Listen to the account in 1 Samuel, the 10th chapter:

"And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day.

"And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them" (1 Samuel 10:9-10).

You may have confidence in the Lord's service. The Savior will help you do what He has called you to do, be it for a time as a worker in the Church or forever as a parent. You may pray for help enough to do the work and know that it will come.

Watch over and train those you call

Now, a word to those who have issued those calls in the Church. When you did, you conveyed the trust of the Lord. But He placed a trust with you as well. Just as those members were called to watch over and strengthen others, you were placed under the same obligation to watch over and strengthen them. If you issued the call and gave no training or did not watch to see that the training was enough, you failed them and the Lord. Even with that training, the path will become difficult for them. You know that, and so you must watch and listen to see when they need strengthening. You will give just enough help to strengthen their faith that the Lord is watching over them and over the people they serve and that they may turn with confidence to Him. To do that well, you must do a lot of praying yourself, for guidance and for them.

Strengthening those who serve us

Finally, a word to those of us who are served by those who are newly called. Our opportunity and our obligation is the same as theirs. We are to watch and strengthen. And each of us has almost endless chances to do it. Every meeting

you attend, every class, every activity will have someone doing something that to them is at the limit of their capacities, or maybe a little beyond. Most of us carry into those situations the attitudes we learn in the world, where we may be quick to notice inferior service. It is too easy to think, "In the Lord's true Church, our standard of performance should be higher than that."

There is more than one way to help the Lord lift them to that standard. One is to express or show our displeasure. I've been the beneficiary of another way, the better way. I've sensed when I was not doing very well when I was speaking or teaching or leading in a meeting. Most people can tell when they are failing. I have been able to tell when I have been not doing well, and I've looked out and seen someone in the audience apparently not paying attention to me, with eyes closed. I've learned not to be irritated. And then they've opened their eyes and smiled at me, with a look of encouragement that was unmistakable. It was a look that said as clearly as if they had spoken to me: "I know the Lord will help you and lift you up. I'm praying for you." I've been in settings where many people listening to me were doing that. And I was lifted beyond what I knew were my abilities, or at least what I had thought my abilities were. You could serve that way when you see people struggling in their service. It will take a lot of praying, but you could watch and you could strengthen, even when your only call in the Church at that moment is to be a follower of Jesus Christ and your only tools are to pray and smile and encourage.

Miracle of growth through service

There is a miracle appearing in the Church. I see it as I travel back to nations after an absence of only a short time. The members and the leaders are changed. Just as Alma promised, their souls have

been enlarged and their understanding enlightened and their minds expanded (see Alma 32:28, 34). They have served each other in faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He has sent them the Holy Ghost as a companion in answer to fervent prayer. Their watching over and testifying and loving and helping each other has let the Lord give a miracle of growth in the hearts and capacities of humble sons and daughters of God.

I know that God the Father lives. He hears and answers our prayers. I testify that His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, has called Gordon B. Hinckley as His prophet and president. I testify that through His authorized servants the Master calls us and that He sustains and transforms us in His service, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

President Hinckley

Sister Mary Ellen Smoot, Relief Society general president, has just spoken to us, followed by Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve. The choir then sang that marvelous hymn "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

We express our appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning. Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing "The Spirit of God." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Val R. Christensen of the Seventy.

The concluding session of the conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

We urge you as you travel home today to obey traffic rules and to use caution and to be courteous in every respect.

A video presentation entitled *Special Witnesses of Christ* will be shown over the

Church satellite system immediately following this session and will also be carried over KSL and KBYU.

We're happy to have with us today Sister Inis Hunter, the widow of President Howard W. Hunter. We're so grateful for her presence.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Gratitude for unity of Church members

Now it becomes my opportunity to say a few words, my brothers and sisters. I am overwhelmed with feelings of thanksgiving this morning. I feel so richly blessed of the Lord. As I look into the faces of the thousands upon thousands who are gathered in this new and beautiful hall and then think of the hundreds of thousands who are assembled across the world listening to this conference, I am almost overcome with feelings of gratitude for the great unity that exists among us. If I may speak personally for a little while, I think no man has been blessed so richly as I have been blessed. I cannot understand it. I so much appreciate your many expressions of kindness and love.

Through the great goodness of others I have traveled far and wide across the earth in the interest of this Church. I have had remarkable opportunities to speak to the world through the generosity of the media. I have lifted my voice in testimony in the great halls of this nation, from Madison Square Garden in New York to the Astrodome in Houston. Men and women of high station have received me and spoken with great respect concerning our work.

On the other hand, during these years I have come to know of the mean and contemptuous ways of our critics. I think the Lord had them in mind when He declared:

"Cursed are all those that shall lift up the heel against mine anointed, saith the Lord, and cry they have sinned when they have not sinned before me, . . . but

have done that which was meet in mine eyes, and which I commanded them.

" . . . Those who cry transgression do it because they are the servants of sin, and are the children of disobedience themselves. . . .

"Wo unto them. . . .

"Their basket shall not be full, their houses and their barns shall perish, and they themselves shall be despised by those that flattered them" (D&C 121:16-17, 19-20).

We leave to Him, whose right it is, judgments that may come to those who oppose His work.

Gratitude for prayers and support

I return to my expressions of gratitude. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your prayers. Thank you for your support in the great work we are all trying to accomplish. Thank you for your obedience to the commandments of God. He is pleased and loves you. Thank you for your faithfulness in carrying forward the great responsibilities which you have. Thank you for your ready response to every call which is made upon you. Thank you for bringing up your children in the way of light and truth. Thank you for the unfailing testimonies which you carry in your hearts concerning God our Eternal Father and His Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Gratitude for youth

I am so grateful for the youth of the Church. There is so much of evil everywhere. Temptation, with all its titillating

influences, is about us everywhere. We lose some to these destructive forces, unfortunately. We sorrow over every one who is lost. We reach out to help them, to save them, but in too many cases our entreaties are spurned. Tragic is the course they are following. It is the way which leads down to destruction.

But there are so many, many hundreds of thousands of our young people who are faithful and true, who are straight as an arrow and as strong as a great wave of the sea in following the course they have mapped out for themselves. It is a course of righteousness and goodness, a course of accomplishment and achievement. They are making something of their lives, and the world will be so much the better for them.

I am profoundly grateful for this wonderful season of history in which we live. There has never been another like it. We, of all people who have walked the earth, are so richly and abundantly blessed.

Gratitude for a testimony of Christ

But of all the things for which I feel grateful this morning, one stands out preeminently. That is a living testimony of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Almighty God, the Prince of Peace, the Holy One.

On one occasion at a missionary meeting in Europe, an elder raised his hand and said, "Give us your testimony and tell us how you gained it."

I feel I might try saying a few words this morning on the evolution of my testimony. This is a personal area, of course. I hope you will excuse that.

Early memories of spiritual feelings

The earliest instance of which I have recollection of spiritual feelings was when I was about five years of age, a very small boy. I was crying from the pain of an earache. There were no wonder drugs at the time. That was 85 years ago. My mother

prepared a bag of table salt and put it on the stove to warm. My father softly put his hands upon my head and gave me a blessing, rebuking the pain and the illness by authority of the holy priesthood and in the name of Jesus Christ. He then took me tenderly in his arms and placed the bag of warm salt at my ear. The pain subsided and left. I fell asleep in my father's secure embrace. As I was falling asleep, the words of his administration floated through my mind. That is the earliest remembrance I have of the exercise of the authority of the priesthood in the name of the Lord.

Later in my youth, my brother and I slept in an unheated bedroom in the winter. People thought that was good for you. Before falling into a warm bed, we knelt to say our prayers. There were expressions of simple gratitude. They concluded in the name of Jesus. The distinctive title of Christ was not used very much when we prayed in those days.

I recall jumping into my bed after I had said *amen*, pulling the covers up around my neck, and thinking of what I had just done in speaking to my Father in Heaven in the name of His Son. I did not have great knowledge of the gospel. But there was some kind of lingering peace and security in communing with the heavens in and through the Lord Jesus.

Growth of testimony as a missionary

When I went on a mission to the British Isles, that testimony quickened. Each morning my companion and I read the Gospel of John together, commenting on each verse. It was a wonderful, illuminating experience. That marvelous testament opens with a declaration of the divinity of the Son of God. It states:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

"The same was in the beginning with God.

"All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. . . .

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:1-3, 14).

I thought of that declaration much then, and I have thought of it much since. It leaves no doubt concerning the individuality of the Father and the Son. To the Son the Father gave the great responsibility of creating the earth, "and without him was not any thing made that was made."

I have seen much of ugliness in this world. Most of it is the work of man. But I think I have seen much more of beauty. I marvel at the majestic works of the Creator. How magnificent they are. And they are all the work of the Son of God.

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." He, the Son of the Father, came to earth. He condescended to leave His royal courts on high—where He stood as Prince, the Firstborn of the Father—to take upon Himself mortality, to be born in a manger, the humblest of all places, in a vassal state ruled by the centuries of Rome.

How could He have condescended further?

He was baptized of John in Jordan "to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). His earthly ministry was preceded by the clever temptations of the adversary. He withstood, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan" (Luke 4:8).

He went about Galilee, Samaria, and Judea preaching the gospel of salvation, causing the blind to see, the lame to walk, the dead to rise to life again. And then, to fulfill His Father's plan of happiness for His children, He gave His life as a price for the sins of each of us.

That testimony grew in my heart as a missionary when I read the New Testament and the Book of Mormon, which

further bore witness of Him. That knowledge became the foundation of my life, standing on the footings of the answered prayers of my childhood.

Apostolic witness of Christ

Since then my faith has grown much further. I have become His Apostle, appointed to do His will and teach His word. I have become His witness to the world. I repeat that witness of faith to you and to all who hear my voice this Sabbath morning.

Jesus is my friend. None other has given me so much. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). He gave His life for me. He opened the way to eternal life. Only a God could do this. I hope that I am deemed worthy of being a friend to Him.

He is my exemplar. His way of life, His absolutely selfless conduct, His outreach to those in need, His final sacrifice all stand as an example to me. I cannot measure up entirely, but I can try.

He marked the path and led the way,
And ev'ry point defines
To light and life and endless day
Where God's full presence shines.
["How Great the Wisdom and the Love," *Hymns*, no. 195]

He is my teacher. No other voice ever spoke such wondrous language as that of the Beatitudes:

"And seeing the multitudes, . . . he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Sunday, April 2, 2000

Morning Session

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:1–10).

No other teacher has ever offered the matchless counsel given the multitude on the mount.

He is my healer. I stand in awe at His wondrous miracles. And yet I know they happened. I accept the truth of these things because I know that He is the Master of life and death. The miracles of His ministry bespeak compassion, love, and a sense of humanity wonderful to behold.

He is my leader. I am honored to be one in the long cavalcade of those who love Him and who have followed Him during the two millennia that have passed since His birth.

Onward, Christian soldiers!
Marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus
Going on before.
Christ, the royal Master,
Leads against the foe;
Forward into battle,
See his banners go!
[“Onward, Christian Soldiers,” *Hymns*, no. 246]

He is my Savior and my Redeemer. Through giving His life in pain and unspeakable suffering, He has reached down to lift me and each of us and all the sons and daughters of God from the abyss of eternal darkness following death. He has provided something better—a sphere of light and understanding, growth and beauty where we may go forward on the road that leads to eternal life. My gratitude knows no bounds. My thanks to my Lord has no conclusion.

He is my God and my King. From everlasting to everlasting, He will reign and rule as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. To His dominion there will be no end. To His glory there will be no night.

None other can take His place. None other ever will. Unblemished and without fault of any kind, He is the Lamb of God, to whom I bow and through whom I approach my Father in Heaven.

Witnesses of the Savior's divinity

Isaiah foretold of His coming:

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

Those who walked with Him in Palestine bore witness of His divinity. The centurion who watched Him die declared in solemnity, “Truly this was the Son of God” (Matthew 27:54).

Thomas, on seeing His resurrected body, cried out in wonder, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28).

Those in this hemisphere to whom He appeared heard the voice of the Father introduce Him: “Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name” (3 Nephi 11:7).

And the Prophet Joseph, speaking in this dispensation, declared:

“And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

“For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father” (D&C 76:22–23).

To which I add my own witness that He is “the way, the truth, and the life” and that “no man cometh unto the Father, but by [Him]” (John 14:6).

Gratefully, and with love undiminished, I bear witness of these things in

His Holy name, even the name of Jesus the Christ, amen.

Elder Val R. Christensen offered the benediction.

The choir sang "The Spirit of God."

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 170th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, April 2, 2000. This session was conducted by President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 170th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television,

cable, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford, with Linda Margetts at the organ. The choir will open these services by singing "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!" Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Richard J. Maynes of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!"

Elder Richard J. Maynes offered the invocation.

President Monson

The Tabernacle Choir will now sing "Come unto Him." Following the singing, Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker.

The choir sang "Come unto Him."

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

With all of you, brothers and sisters, I express appreciation to President Hinckley for his tireless shaping of the Church's future, of which this Conference Center is emblematic.

Becoming spiritually content

In just a few words, a major insight came to the conscientious and the converted through Alma: "For I ought to be

content with the things which the Lord hath allotted unto me" (Alma 29:3). However, just prior, Alma urgently desired to be the "trump of God" so that he might "shake the earth" (Alma 29:1). But not because of ego; in fact, Alma wanted to declare repentance and the plan of redemption to all mankind so that there might be no more human sorrow (see Alma 29:2). Yet Alma's contentment rested on the reality that God finally allots to us according to our wills (see Alma 29:4). What could be more fair?

Thus becoming content with his calling, Alma then meekly hoped to be an instrument to help save some soul (see Alma 29:9). A significant spiritual journey is thus reflected in but nine soliloquy-like verses.

The same contentment awaits us if our own desires can be worked through and aligned.

What some mortals are allotted includes, for instance, very reduced chances because of poverty: "And the people began to be distinguished by ranks, according to their riches and their chances for learning; yea, some were ignorant because of their poverty, and others did receive great learning because of their riches" (3 Nephi 6:12).

Furthermore, malevolent, human social structures have included, in the past, tragic constraints like slavery and concentration camps.

Nevertheless, we are to do what we can within our allotted "acreage," while still using whatever stretch there may be in any tethers. Within what is allotted to us, we can have spiritual contentment. Paul described it as "godliness with contentment," signifying the adequate presence of attributes such as love, hope, meekness, patience, and submissiveness (1 Timothy 6:6).

Bearing limitations and deprivations

Yet there are other fixed limitations in life. For instance, some have allot-

ments including physical, mental, or geographic constraints. There are those who are unmarried, through no fault of their own, or yearning but childless couples. Still others face persistent and unreconciled relationships within their circles of loved ones, including offspring who have "[become] for themselves," resistant to parental counsel (3 Nephi 1:29). In such and similar situations, there are so many prickly and daily reminders.

Being content means acceptance without self-pity. Meekly borne, however, deprivations such as these can end up being like excavations that make room for greatly enlarged souls.

Some undergo searing developments that cut suddenly into mortality's status quo. Some have trials to *pass through*, while still others have allotments they are to *live with*. Paul lived with his "thorn in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:7).

Suffice it to say, such mortal allotments will be changed in the world to come. The exception is unrepented sin that shapes our status in the next world.

Doing all we can within our allotment

Thus, developing greater contentment within certain of our existing constraints and opportunities is one of our challenges. Otherwise we may feel underused, underwhelmed, and underappreciated—while, ironically, within our givens are unused opportunities for service all about us. Neither should we pine away, therefore, for certain things outside God's givens, such as for the powerful voice of an angel, because there is so much to do within what has been allotted to us (see Alma 29:3–4). Furthermore, varied as our allotted circumstances may be, we can still keep the commandments of God!

Meanwhile, we serve as each other's clinical material in the particular sample of humanity constituting what is "allotted unto [us]." The sample may shrink or swell, but most important is *what we are and what we do* within those varied alloca-

tions and in the particular "work to which [we] have been called" (Alma 29:6).

Thus, "the holy present" contains the allotted acres for our discipleship. We need not be situated in prime time with prime visibility in order to work out our own salvation!

Learning the necessary lessons of life

In contrast, however, as to improving our behavior, there are no borders that we cannot cross and no shortage of visas for those willing to venture!

Incremental improvement is, therefore, the order of the day, and it clearly requires the accompaniment of the Lord's long-suffering as we struggle to learn the necessary lessons.

Mary, having been told some wondrous things about herself and what lay ahead, nevertheless "kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:19). Pondering often precedes contentment.

Performance is what matters, not the size of the stage. The Sea of Galilee, only 13 miles by 7, was nevertheless large enough to provide the disciples with a vital experience involving faith and walking on the water (see Matthew 14:22-33). The wind was boisterous and frightening! Even so, compare the size of those Galilean swells and the length of that storm with what Nephi and party had to endure on the vast ocean! (see 1 Nephi 18:13-21). Yet both episodes provided the needed learning experiences. Of course, I should be careful about comparisons involving excesses of water, realizing Noah is in the historical audience!

Thus, less spectacular episodes, just as good individuals with lower profiles, are "no less serviceable" in order to get the job done (Alma 48:19).

On a larger scale, for instance, the prophet Mormon at first thought his people were sorrowing unto repentance (see Mormon 2:12-13). Yet he soon discerned that theirs was not actually the

sorrowing unto repentance but the "sorrowing of the damned," stranding them in a "no-man's-land." Compare that episode to the prodigal son's solitary working through of his own repentance; since his sorrow was real, he truly "came to himself" (Luke 15:17). Sometimes we learn "by sad experience," but sometimes not! (D&C 121:39).

Responses matter, not allotments

Life's necessary defining moments come within our allotments, and we make "on the record" choices within these allotments. Our responses are what matter. Sufficient unto each life are the tests thereof! (see Matthew 6:34).

Meanwhile, people regularly sell their souls for much less than the whole world. In Robert Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons*, Sir Thomas More is soon to be martyred, partly because his friend Rich, having been bought off by a local office, has betrayed him. More, "looking into Rich's face, with pain and amusement," speaks: "For Wales? Why, Richard, it profits a man nothing to give his soul for the whole world . . . But for Wales!" (*A Man for All Seasons* [1960], 92). Let this same rebuke hold for any preoccupation which preempts us from spiritual things!

Ponder how Jesus was and is the Lord of the universe (see D&C 45:1; 76:24; Moses 1:33; 2:1). Yet His ministry, as we all know, was accomplished in a very tiny geographical space. His ministerial travels were very limited. Yet therein the Savior accomplished the Atonement for all of mankind! There were certainly much more prominent hills than Golgotha and much more resplendent gardens than Gethsemane. No matter; these were sufficient to host the central act of all human history!

We can draw upon that glorious Atonement by repenting. We can learn to serve and to forgive within our sample of humanity, including settings no larger than the family or friendships.

God's justice and mercy are perfect

The justice and mercy of God will have been so demonstrably perfect that at the Final Judgment there will be no complaints, including from those who once questioned what God had allotted in the mortal framework (see 2 Nephi 9:14–15; Alma 5:15–19; 12:3–14; 42:23–26, 30).

Hence, we can and “ought to be content with the things . . . allotted unto [us]” (Alma 29:3), being circumstantially content but without being self-satisfied and behaviorally content with ourselves (see 3 Nephi 12:48; 27:27; Matthew 5:48).

Such contentment is more than shoulder-shrugging passivity. It reflects our participative assent rather than uncaring resignation.

The Lord knows our circumstances and the intents of our hearts, and surely the talents and gifts He has given us. He is able to gauge perfectly how we have performed within what is allotted to us, including by lifting up some of the many surrounding hands that hang down. Thus, yearning for expanded opportunities while failing to use those at hand is bad form spiritually.

What we could and have done within our allotted acreage, therefore, is known perfectly by the Master of the vineyard.

Be meek and willingly obedient

Their meekness and larger capacity for spiritual contentment may be one reason why God uses the weak of the world to accomplish His work (see D&C 1:19, 23; 35:13; 133:58–59; 1 Corinthians 1:27). The worldly are usually not very interested in doing what they regard as the Lord's lowly work anyway.

Significantly, too, the Lord refuses to intimidate by sending legions of angels in order to ensure that individuals do His will (see Matthew 26:47–53). His will is to be done “because of the word,” not because we are compelled (Alma 36:26).

The rule has been, is, and will remain “Nevertheless, thou mayest choose for thyself” (Moses 3:17). The Lord wants conversion without intimidation.

Let us remember in our age of spin, the only spin God desires is our freely turning away from sin and turning to Him. Therefore, the Lord does not seek to overwhelm us but instead to help us overcome the world! (see D&C 64:2; Revelation 3:21).

Thus, within our allotments we see how the saintly display kindness even within barbed-wire circumstances, yet others have barbed attitudes even within opulence. Meanwhile, the discontented continue to build their own pools of self-pity, some Olympic size.

The Atonement brings contentment

We see something else in Alma's inspired and instructive episode. Alma acknowledges that God has placed individuals in every nation who can preach and teach His word (see Alma 29:8). Thus, if we press too much, too often, and too hard for enlarged personal roles, we could actually shrink the field of action needed by others. Furthermore, our trusting contentment lets the Holy Ghost have precious time in which to do His special work.

When spiritually aligned, a poise can come, even when we do not know “the meaning of all things” (1 Nephi 11:17). Such contented assurance produces not arrogance but quiet acceptance, which is its own form of being “anxiously engaged” but without all the bells and whistles (D&C 58:27; see also verse 28).

However, this spiritual contentment rests on our accepting the Atonement of Jesus, because we “have come to a knowledge of the goodness of God, and his matchless power, and his wisdom, and his patience, and his long-suffering towards the children of men; and also, the atonement which has been prepared from the foundation of the world” (Mosiah 4:6).

Again, brothers and sisters, seeing Alma move from wanting to be a “trump” to being a humble “instrument” and from wanting to “shake the earth” to perhaps bringing “some soul to repentance” is a stunning transition! Furthermore, isn’t it wonderful that we are permitted to grow, whether that growth is expressed in the space of nine verses or in a lifetime?

Anna Jo’s allotment and faith

Colleen and I have a special granddaughter, Anna Josephine, who was born without a left hand. The other day a conversation was overheard between Anna Jo, almost five, and her cousin Talmage, three. Talmage said reassuringly as they played together, “Anna Jo, when you grow up you will have five fingers.” Anna Jo said, “No, Talmage, when I grow up I won’t have five fingers, but when I get to heaven I will have a hand.”

If Anna Jo, who has difficult days ahead, stays steady within what has been allotted to her, she will continue to be a great blessing to many people!

How blessed we are that Alma’s words have been preserved for all of us. May we liken Alma’s words to ourselves (see 1 Nephi 19:23). I pray for this in the name of Him who counts all sparrows and all fingers and yet is the Lord of the universe, even Jesus Christ, amen!

President Monson

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

We will now hear from Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi of the Seventy.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

Elder Maxwell, we thank our Father in Heaven for the miraculous extension of your apostolic ministry. We are grateful that the declaration of your testimony has continued on into this beautiful new pavilion. We love you, and we pray for you.

And President Hinckley, on behalf of nearly 11 million members of this Church, may we thank the Lord for the extension of your ministry. I remember explicitly the groundbreaking service for this building you conducted just under three years ago. In his benediction at that service, President Boyd K. Packer asked for safety in construction, beauty in completion, and then one more favor of heaven. He asked, President, that you would be allowed to see this sight now before our eyes, preside at this pulpit, and declare your testimony here. We all thank heaven for you and for that answer to prayer.

As doves to the windows

These are surely some of the days which our faithful and farsighted ancestors saw in the earliest years of the Restoration. In a general conference of the Church in April 1844, the brethren recalled those first gatherings of 1830. One of them said:

“We [talked] about the kingdom of God as if we had the world at our command; we talked with great confidence, and talked big things, although we were not many [in number]; . . . we looked [and] if we did not see *this* [congregation], we saw by vision, the church of God, a thousand times larger [than it was then], although [at the time] we were not enough to well man a farm, or meet a woman with a milk pail. . . . All the members [of the Church] met in conference, in a room 20 feet square. . . . We talked

about . . . people coming as doves to the windows, that all nations should flock unto [the Church]. . . . If we had told the people what our eyes behold this day, we should not [have been] believed.”¹

If this was their feeling in that fateful year of 1844, just prior to Joseph Smith’s martyrdom, what must those same brethren and sisters see from their eternal home on a day like this! So much has happened since then for which they and we need to be grateful. And, of course, this is not the end. We have much work yet to do, in both the quality and quantity of our faithfulness and our service. George A. Smith, counselor in the First Presidency to President Brigham Young, once said by way of caution, “We may build temples, erect stately domes, magnificent spires [and] grand towers, in honor of our religion, but if we fail to live the principles of that religion . . . and to acknowledge God in all our thoughts, we shall fall short of the blessings which its practical exercise would ensure.”² We must be humble and conscientious. The honor and the glory of all that is good goes to God, and there is much still ahead of us that will be refining, even difficult, as He leads us from strength to strength.

Our debt to our faithful forebears

In all of this my mind has turned to those early Saints who are too often lost to history, those who quietly and faithfully bore the kingdom forward through far more difficult days. So many of them seem almost nameless to us now. Most went unheralded to their graves—often early graves. Some few have made it into a line or two of Church history, but most have come and gone with neither high office nor history’s regard. These folks, our collective ancestors, slipped into eternity as quietly and anonymously as they lived their religion. These are the silent Saints of whom President J. Reuben Clark once spoke when he thanked them all, “especially,” he said, “the meekest

and lowliest of them, [largely] unknown [and] unremembered, [except] round the hearthstones of their children and their children’s children who pass down from generation to generation the story of their faith.”³

Whether longtime member or newest of converts, we are all the beneficiaries of such faithful forebears. In this beautiful new building and in this historic conference convened in it, I have sensed how much I owe to those who had so much less than I but who seem in virtually every case to have done more with it to build the kingdom than I have done.

Perhaps it has always been so down through the dispensations. Jesus once reminded His disciples that they were reaping in fields wherein they had bestowed no labor.⁴ Moses had said to his people earlier:

“The Lord thy God shall [bring] thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, . . . to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not,

“And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not.”⁵

Sacrifices to build the Kirtland Temple

My mind goes back 167 years to a little handful of women, older men, and those children that could labor who were left to keep construction going on the Kirtland Temple while virtually every man well enough to do so had undertaken a relief march of 1,000 miles to aid the Saints in Missouri. The records indicate that quite literally every woman in Kirtland was engaged in knitting and spinning in order to clothe the men and boys laboring on the temple.

Elder Heber C. Kimball wrote, “The Lord only knows the scenes of poverty, tribulation, and distress which we passed through in order to accomplish this.” It was recorded that one leader of the day, looking upon the suffering and poverty

of the Church, frequently went upon the walls of that building by day and by night, weeping and crying aloud to the Almighty to send means whereby they might finish that building.⁶

Peter Neilson's example of sacrifice

It was not any easier when the Saints moved west and began to settle in these valleys. As a young man of Primary and Aaronic Priesthood age, I attended church in the grand old St. George Tabernacle, construction for which had begun in 1863. During very lengthy sermons I would amuse myself by gazing about the building, admiring the marvelous pioneer craftsmanship that had built that striking facility. Did you know, by the way, that there are 184 clusters of grapes carved into the ceiling cornice of that building? (Some of those sermons were *really* long!) But most of all I enjoyed counting the window panes—2,244 of them—because I grew up on the story of Peter Neilson, one of those little-noted and now-forgotten Saints of whom we have been speaking.

In the course of constructing that tabernacle, the local brethren ordered the glass for the windows from New York and had it shipped around the cape to California. But a bill of \$800 was due and payable before the panes could be picked up and delivered to St. George. Brother David H. Cannon, later to preside over the St. George Temple being built at the same time, was charged with the responsibility of raising the needed funds. After painstaking effort, the entire community, giving virtually everything they had to these two monumental building projects, had been able to come up with only \$200 cash. On sheer faith Brother Cannon committed a team of freighters to prepare to leave for California to get the glass. He continued to pray that the enormous balance of \$600 would somehow be forthcoming before their departure.

Living in nearby Washington, Utah, was Peter Neilson, a Danish immigrant who had been saving for years to add on to his modest two-room adobe home. On the eve of the freighters' departure for California, Peter spent a sleepless night in that tiny little house. He thought of his conversion in far-off Denmark and his subsequent gathering with the Saints in America. After coming west he had settled and struggled to make a living in Sanpete. And then, just as some prosperity seemed imminent there, he answered the call to uproot and go to the Cotton Mission, bolstering the pathetic and sagging efforts of the alkali-soiled, malaria-plagued, flood-bedeveled settlers of Dixie. As he lay in bed that night contemplating his years in the Church, he weighed the sacrifices asked of him against the wonderful blessings he had received. Somewhere in those private hours he made a decision.

Some say it was a dream, others say an impression, still others simply a call to duty. However the direction came, Peter Neilson arose before dawn on the morning the teams were to leave for California. With only a candle and the light of the gospel to aid him, Peter brought out of a secret hiding place \$600 in gold coins—half eagles, eagles, and double eagles. His wife, Karen, aroused by the predawn bustling, asked why he was up so early. He said only that he had to walk quickly the seven miles to St. George to give \$600 to Brother David H. Cannon.

As the first light of morning fell on the beautiful red cliffs of southern Utah, a knock came at Brother Cannon's door. There stood Peter Neilson, holding a red bandanna which sagged under the weight it carried. "Good morning, David," said Peter. "I hope I am not too late. You will know what to do with this money."

With that he turned on his heel and retraced his steps back to Washington, back to a faithful and unquestioning wife, and back to a small two-room adobe

house that remained just two rooms for the rest of his life.⁷

John R. Moyle's example of commitment

One other account from those early, faithful builders of modern Zion. John R. Moyle lived in Alpine, Utah, about 22 miles as the crow flies to the Salt Lake Temple, where he was the chief superintendent of masonry during its construction. To make certain he was always at work by 8:00, Brother Moyle would start walking about 2:00 A.M. on Monday mornings. He would finish his work week at 5:00 P.M. on Friday and then start the walk home, arriving there shortly before midnight. Each week he would repeat that schedule for the entire time he served on the construction of the temple.

Once when he was home on the weekend, one of his cows bolted during milking and kicked Brother Moyle in the leg, shattering the bone just below the knee. With no better medical help than they had in such rural circumstances, his family and friends took a door off the hinges and strapped him onto that make-shift operating table. They then took the bucksaw they had been using to cut branches from a nearby tree and amputated his leg just a few inches below the knee.

When against all medical likelihood the leg finally started to heal, Brother Moyle took a piece of wood and carved an artificial leg. First he walked in the house. Then he walked around the yard. Finally he ventured out about his property. When he felt he could stand the pain, he strapped on his leg, walked the 22 miles to the Salt Lake Temple, climbed the scaffolding, and with a chisel in his hand hammered out the declaration "Holiness to the Lord."⁸

Be a holy people unto the Lord

With the faith of our fathers and mothers so evident on every side today,

may I close with the remainder of the passage I cited at the outset of my remarks. It seems particularly relevant in our wonderful circumstances today. After Moses had told that earlier generation of the blessings they enjoyed because of the faithfulness of those who had gone before them, he said:

"Then beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth. . . .

"Ye shall not go after other gods, . . . the gods of the people which are round about you. . . .

"For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: [he] hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself. . . .

"[He] did not . . . choose you, because ye were more in number than any [other] people; for ye were the fewest of all people:

"But because [he] loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers. . . .

"Know therefore that the Lord . . . is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations."⁹

We are still being blessed by that love from God and by the faithfulness of our spiritual and literal progenitors down through a thousand generations. May we do as much with the blessings we have been given as they did out of the deprivations so many of them faced. In such abundance may we never "forget the Lord" nor "go after other gods," but always be "an holy people unto the Lord." If we do so, those who hunger and thirst for the word of the Lord will continue to come "as doves to [our] windows." They will come seeking peace and growth and salvation. If we live our religion, they will find all of that and more.

An overwhelming debt of gratitude

We are a blessed people. In such a marvelous time as this, I feel an overwhelming debt of gratitude. I thank my

Father in Heaven for blessings unnumbered and incalculable, first and foremost being the gift of His Only Begotten Son, Jesus of Nazareth, our Savior and King. I testify that Christ's perfect life and loving sacrifice constituted literally a King's ransom, an atonement willingly paid, to lead us not only from death's prison but also the prisons of sorrow and sin and self-indulgence.

I know that Joseph Smith beheld the Father and the Son and that this day is a direct extension of that day. I owe much for the precious knowledge of which I testify here. I owe much for the priceless heritage that has been given to me. Indeed I owe everything, and I pledge the rest of my life in giving it—in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. "Conference Minutes," *Times and Seasons*, 1 May 1844, 522–23; see also *History of the Church*, 6:288–89.
2. *Deseret News* (weekly), 17 July 1872, 348.
3. In Conference Report, Oct. 1947, 155; or "To Them of the Last Wagon," *Ensign*, July 1997, 35–36.
4. See John 4:38.
5. Deuteronomy 6:10–11.
6. "Extracts from H. C. Kimball's Journal," *Times and Seasons*, 15 Apr. 1845, 867; see also Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 2nd ed. (1945), 67–68.
7. See Andrew Karl Larson, *The Red Hills of November* (1957), 311–13.
8. See Theodore Moyle Burton, "Two Traditions of John Rowe Moyle," in *Biographies and Reminiscences*, ed. Gene A. Sessions (1974), 202–3, from the James Henry Moyle Collection, Historical Department Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; see also Vaughn J. Featherstone, *Man of Holiness* (1998), 140–41.
9. Deuteronomy 6:12, 14; 7:6–9.

Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi

Teaching the gospel on an airplane

A few years ago, right before Christmas, I had a stake conference assignment in California. On the flight back to Utah, I decided to take a short nap. My seat was C, near the aisle. Just before the cabin door closed, a beautiful lady in her mid-70s stood beside me and said, "May I have my seat?" I said, "Yes, ma'am." That was the end of my nap. She loved to talk.

She said, "I don't know why I should have to fly to a cold place like Utah at Christmastime to visit my grandchildren. I hate to leave sunny California."

She went on to say, "Besides, there are strange and weird people in Utah. They call themselves 'Mormons.' My daughter married one of them."

I said, "I am sorry, but before you go any further, I should tell you that I am one of them."

Then she said, "I am sorry—I didn't mean that."

I said, "Oh, you really meant that, didn't you?"

Our conversation went on until we were above Provo. We knew we would soon be landing in Salt Lake.

"Patti"—that's her name—"you have been talking for most of the flight. I feel like I have known you from the pre-earth life. Before we land in Salt Lake City, I'd like to ask you a few questions if I may."¹

I asked her sincerely,² "Patti, your deceased husband—do you know you can see him again?"

She said, "Oh, is that possible?"

"Do you know your deceased son, Matt, who died as a baby—you will see him also in the future?"

Her eyes became moist, and her voice was shaking. The Spirit of the Lord touched her. I sensed she had missed them so much.

Then I prayerfully asked her, "Patti, do you know you have a loving and kind Heavenly Father, who loves you so dearly?"

She said, "Do I?"

"Patti, do you know your Heavenly Father has a special plan for you and that your family can be forever?"

"Can we?" she replied.

"Have you ever heard the plan before?"

She said, "No."

Very sincerely I asked her, "Would you like to know about it?"

"Yes, I would," she responded.

The Spirit of the Lord touched her deeply. And the Lord promises us, "For mine elect hear my voice and harden not their hearts."³

He also said: "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep. . . . My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."⁴

The love of God is in our hearts

Nephi desired to see father Lehi's dream—the tree of life⁵—and he did. Then Nephi also saw the beautiful baby Jesus.⁶ And the angel asked, "Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw?"⁷

Nephi replied, "Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things."⁸

Before we came to this earth, our Heavenly Father gently and peacefully placed in our bosoms "the love of God." In Heavenly Father's eyes, you are a very special child. My friend Patti has the spark of divinity in her soul. When Patti

heard the word of Heavenly Father, she was touched deeply and she responded to His voice.

We were total strangers, but the Lord placed one of His precious daughters quietly next to me. I was praying earnestly that the Spirit of the Lord would touch her and speak to her.

How to share the message of the Lord

How can you and I share the beautiful message of the Lord Jesus Christ?

First, cultivate an awareness; bring others to a knowledge. President Gordon B. Hinckley teaches us:

"Let there be cultivated an awareness in every member's heart of his [or her] own potential for bringing others to a knowledge of the truth. . . . Let him pray with great earnestness about it. Let each member pray."⁹

President Hinckley then quotes the testimony of Alma:

"O Lord, wilt thou grant unto us that we may have success in bringing them again unto thee. . . .

"Behold, O Lord, their souls are precious; . . . give unto us, O Lord, power and wisdom that we may bring these, our brethren, . . . unto thee."¹⁰

In the LDS Bible Dictionary it states, "The object of prayer is not to change the will of God, but to secure for ourselves and for others blessings that God is already willing to grant, but that are made conditional on our asking for them."¹¹

Second, a good example is our best tool. President Hinckley taught us, "The most effective tract we will carry will be the goodness of our own lives."¹² As we live the gospel, we will be like a lighthouse on a hilltop,¹³ "the light" and "the salt of the earth."¹⁴

We can partake of "the love of God," "the tree of life," and drink from "the fountain of living waters"¹⁵ daily by communing with our Holy Father, immersing ourselves in the scriptures, and medi-

tation. Then the Lord will bless us to be more sensitive to speak to those souls which He has prepared for us.

Third, act at a time when you feel the Spirit. Elder M. Russell Ballard taught us: "The key to success in bringing souls unto Christ is to act at a time when you feel the Spirit and you sense that your friend does also. . . . Through our faith, our trust in the Lord, and our good works, we can bring many souls unto the Lord."¹⁶

As we seek and pray in faith,¹⁷ the Lord will guide us, and His elect will soon embrace¹⁸ "the glad tidings of great joy,"¹⁹ to partake of the eternal and "infinite atonement"²⁰ of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Patti's baptism and sealing

The missionaries taught Patti. Three weeks later, while she was staying in Utah, Patti called me. "Brother Kikuchi, this is Patti. I am going to be baptized. Would you come to my baptismal services?"

My wife and I went to her baptism. Many members were kindly fellowshiping her. Oh, I shall never forget her joyful countenance as she came out of the water!

I shall never forget her sweet tears at the sacred altar in the Salt Lake Temple a year later. I remember her peaceful and celestial glow when she was sealed to her deceased husband and son and living daughter who had become a member of the Church. She now knows her family is forever in the Lord. My friend Patti Louise Donaldson found the Lord Jesus Christ. Now she lives in Utah.

"I will draw near unto you"

My dear friends who are within the sound of my voice, you are a son or daughter of Heavenly Father. You were once in His holy presence. I know that your Heavenly Father has a special plan

for you and your family to return to live with Him. Let's go home. Let us prepare to go home to our Heavenly Father's place. We want to share with you your Heavenly Father's love. You will find the love of God, which is "the most joyous"²¹ to your soul.

My dear brothers and sisters, I testify to you that Heavenly Father sent His Only Begotten Son and that Jesus Christ died for you and me. He said:

"How sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not.

"For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; . . .

"Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—

"Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men."²²

He loves you. He knows you. He lives. In 1820 Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus, came to the boy Joseph and established His kingdom so that we may be able to go home. By now, can you hear "the voice of the good shepherd"?²³ Your Savior is calling you. Come, come and partake of His love. He invites you, "Ye shall call upon me while I am near." Then He promises, "Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you."²⁴ I know that He lives. I know that President Hinckley is our prophet. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 28:16.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 30:5, 11.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 29:7.
4. John 10:14, 27.
5. See 1 Nephi 11:8–9.
6. See 1 Nephi 11:15–20.

7. 1 Nephi 11:21.
8. 1 Nephi 11:22.
9. "Find the Lambs, Feed the Sheep," *Ensign*, May 1999, 106.
10. Alma 31:34–35.
11. Bible Dictionary, "Prayer," 753.
12. *Ensign*, May 1999, 107.
13. See Luke 11:33, 36.
14. Matthew 5:13–14.
15. 1 Nephi 11:22, 25.
16. In Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 41; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 33.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 18:18.
18. See Doctrine and Covenants 31:7.
19. Mosiah 3:3.
20. See Alma 34:10, 12.
21. 1 Nephi 11:23.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 19:15–19.

23. Alma 5:38.
24. Doctrine and Covenants 88:62–63.

President Monson

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve has just spoken to us, followed by Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now sing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." Following the singing, Elders Loren C. Dunn and John B. Dickson of the Seventy will address us.

The choir and congregation sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Elder Loren C. Dunn

The importance of being a good father

I was in a busy airport last week and there, amidst great numbers of people rushing to catch their planes, was a father kneeling down by his son, patiently feeding him an ice cream cone which the son was too small to hold himself. The little boy needed help because his snowsuit, which kept him warm, also made it impossible for his arms to bend. I thought to myself, "What a great dad!"

There should be no other word that is more important to us than *father* or *mother*, and it is the word *father* that I would like to talk about. It's not just a matter of how to be a good father. There is plenty written and much good advice given, even at this conference. It is the commitment to be a good father that I want to talk about also.

"Because my father sent me"

The history of the gospel of Jesus Christ from Adam and Eve down to the present day is closely associated with

father and mother and family. The introductory pages of the Book of Mormon have the great prophet Nephi, while recounting the trials and blessings of his day, first paying homage to his father: "I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father; and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days, nevertheless, having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days; yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God, therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days."¹

Enos, likewise, first recognized his father for the preparation he received: "Behold, it came to pass that I, Enos, knowing my father that he was a just man—for he taught me in his language, and also in the nurture and admonition of the Lord—and blessed be the name of my God for it."²

When the Prophet Joseph Smith first received the vision of the angel Moroni, he was instructed to tell his father, who, in turn, confirmed that it was true and

that Joseph should follow the directions of Moroni. Even with the restoration of the gospel, the Lord did not separate a son from his righteous father.

The Savior of the world, in giving us a definition of the meaning of the gospel in 3 Nephi, chapter 27, said simply that He came to work out the plan of salvation and give His life for the sake of all mankind because His Father sent Him. The love between the Father and the Son was so perfect that the Savior gave it as His first reason for coming into mortality and the suffering He did for us in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross.

The gospel is designed to teach us what to do as fathers and mothers, and it would seem that when families are intact, we may very well do good things and give as our first reason "because my Father sent me"³ or because a father showed me the way.

A father's encouragement to "cowboy up"

I have had the honor of working with the missionaries of the Church for over three decades, and I know that a great many of them were able to get through those first shaky minutes and hours and days of their mission because of their fathers or mothers. I remember one experience of a fine young man who spent his life on the ranch, just as his own father did. When the boy got into the mission field, it was all strange: too many people, not enough open spaces. He wanted badly to go home. Finally the mission president had the young missionary call his father. The father listened patiently as his son said how homesick he was, and then the father spoke in terms that his son could understand, and as I heard about this, it brought a smile to my face. He said with firmness but love, "Son, you're just going to have to 'cowboy up.'" The boy knew exactly what that meant, and he is hanging on as the spirit of his mission begins to come. He knows his father will not give up on him.

Innumerable are the numbers of those young people who did not quit and go home during those first days of being away at school or away from home the first time because of the good influence of fathers and mothers.

A charge from President McKay

When I sat across from President David O. McKay and was first called to this calling some 32 years ago, I remember that after he discussed with me what would be expected, he then charged me to serve by asking me to carry out this calling in a way that would be pleasing to my own father. That was enough of a challenge for a lifetime. President McKay knew my father, who had been a stake president for 20 years, and I looked on my father as one of the greatest men I knew. My first understanding of how important I was to my father and how real the Savior was, was when I heard him pray for us in family prayer.

Commit to being good fathers

Now there are some exceptions, such as death and other serious circumstances, but what is needed today is for fathers to commit to being fathers, whatever that might take—to assume the responsibility and to live by it, that you may become an anchor to all who come after you. If the example has not been set in your life, then reach out and try to help establish it, and resolve that that example will begin with you if there is no one else. If all is not perfect in your home, then let it begin with you.

It was President Harold B. Lee who said that the turning of the hearts of the children to their fathers and the fathers to the children was not only a commission to do work for the dead, but it also applied to the living and the importance of keeping those family relationships intact in this life.⁴

“As a father he succeeded”

I finish with the words of the poet Edgar A. Guest, who wrote of an average, everyday man—a father—and his family. The last words of his poem say, “This his praise, if praise be needed, / As a father he succeeded.”⁵ A father succeeds when he steps forward and accepts his commitment as a father, always loving, praying for, and doing what he can for his family, and never giving up.

May the sacred name of Heavenly Father be spoken with reverence in our homes.

May the name of *father* carry with it the kind of love and confidence that will bring peace and hope and righteous determination.

Testimony

May I add at this point my own witness and testimony as to the truthfulness of this work, adding to that which has been said from this pulpit during this great conference. I feel like I have stood with the Prophet Joseph in the Sacred Grove when there appeared the Father and the Son; I have sat with the Saints in

Kirtland when the temple of the Lord was accepted and dedicated; I received my covenants in Nauvoo; I knelt at the cemetery in Winter Quarters when a loved one was buried; I also held up my arm to sustain Brigham Young as the President of the Church; I stood on Ensign Peak with Brother Brigham the day after he arrived in the valley, when he looked over an expanse which he had already seen by revelation and knew from that experience where the temple was to be built. I know this work is true. I know God lives. I know He lives. I know God lives. I know that Jesus Christ is our Redeemer and our Savior, that the Prophet Joseph saw what he said he saw, that Gordon B. Hinckley carries the keys of this great work today, and that this is the gospel of Jesus Christ. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 1 Nephi 1:1.
2. Enos 1:1.
3. 3 Nephi 27:13.
4. See “Preparing to Meet the Lord,” *Improvement Era*, Feb. 1965, 123–24.
5. “Old Man Green,” in *Collected Verse of Edgar A. Guest* (1934), 560.

Elder John B. Dickson

A brief introduction to the Church

It is exciting to be with you today in this beautiful Conference Center. I would like to give a brief synopsis of some of our beliefs to those who are learning about the Church.

The situation of many of you may be like that of my deceased father-in-law, Robert E. Jones, who joined the Church in 1960. He had been raised in a wonderful Christian home, where reading the Bible and adhering to Christian principles were a normal part of family life. At his mother’s knee he learned many truths, including the importance of hav-

ing faith in Jesus Christ and following His example.

As he examined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, he was able to retain truths formerly acquired, while enjoying a rich treasure of additional knowledge. I would like to mention 10 points that he understood that can also help you.

1. God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, have a plan of happiness for the human family.

We proclaim that there truly is a God in heaven and that the human family lived with Him in a premortal exist-

tence. We are God's children. He loves us and has prepared a plan whereby through His Son, Jesus Christ, we will enjoy blessings beyond this mortal life. These blessings include an immortal, glorious, resurrected body for all mankind and the opportunity to return to our Heavenly Father's presence as eternal families for those who have faith in Jesus Christ and are obedient to the conditions of His gospel.

2. Jesus Christ organized His Church during His mortal ministry.

The Bible helps us understand that Jesus organized His Church with apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, and other Church officials who held the priesthood, which is the authority to act in God's name. Their work was to bring all men to a "unity of the faith" regarding Jesus Christ and His teachings (Ephesians 4:13).

3. The Church of Christ and many simple truths were lost.

Several Bible prophets declared that there would be a "falling away" (2 Thessalonians 2:3) from the true gospel, a time when there would be a "famine" (Amos 8:11) regarding the word of God and "divisions" (1 Corinthians 11:18) caused as "grievous wolves" (Acts 20:29) would enter and disrupt the flock or the people of the Church. These prophecies became a reality when, in the years following the Savior's Crucifixion, the Apostles were killed, the authority to direct the Church was eventually lost, and for many centuries, including the period known as the Dark Ages, the Church of Jesus Christ was not found on the earth.

4. The hearts of men and a location were prepared for a restoration of the gospel.

The closing of the Dark Ages took place as the Reformation unfolded, where brave men and women recognized the need to incorporate doctrines that Jesus had instituted back into the church. We are grateful for the great reformers such as Luther, Wycliffe, Wesley, Tyn-

dale, and many others who helped set the stage for open religious dialogue, study of the scriptures, and the desire engendered in the hearts of good men and women for an expression of religious liberty. But their faith, their desire, their sacrifice, and even their martyrdom were insufficient to restore that which was lost.

The founding fathers of the United States of America were inspired in drafting a constitution that guarantees religious and other freedoms for all. Religious tolerance and changing attitudes helped prepare a people, while the conditions created under the umbrella of the U.S. Constitution prepared a location where the restoration of the gospel could take place.

5. Latter-day events were anticipated by the prophets of old.

Old Testament prophets spoke of the last days as an era when all the ordinances and blessings of the gospel would be available to man. Daniel, Jeremiah, Joel, Ezekiel, Malachi, and other ancient prophets spoke of the great events that would take place in our day. Isaiah spoke of the "marvellous work and a wonder" that would come to pass, referring to the promised restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Isaiah 29:14). The Apostle Peter spoke of the "restitution of all things" in the latter days (Acts 3:21).

6. The gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored in its fulness.

We declare that the great restoration that the ancient prophets spoke of began in 1820, when the Lord called a young man named Joseph Smith to reestablish the Church. The Restoration began as young Joseph, perplexed by the confusion among the churches of his day, sought to know which church was true. I solemnly declare that, in a sacred grove of trees in upstate New York, this young man was visited by the Father and the Son and was told he was to join none of the existing churches. He learned that he was to be an instrument in the hands of God to again establish the Church of Jesus Christ.

In time Joseph received the priesthood of God, giving him the authority to organize the Church once again. The Church now exists with apostles, prophets, and others who have authority to administer the ordinances of the gospel. Since its organization on April 6, 1830, the Church has begun to fill the whole earth, as the ancient prophet Daniel had prophesied (see Daniel 2:35, 45). We now find ourselves on the threshold of unprecedented growth, when millions are receiving this good news and are joining the Church.

7. Another witness of Christ has been given to our generation.

In 1827 Joseph Smith received ancient metal plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated. It contains a history of God's dealings with His people in ancient America and stands beside the Bible as another witness of Jesus Christ. From its pages we learn more fundamental truths about the nature of God, the mission of His Son, and His plan for His children.

8. The family can be eternal.

An exciting truth that has been revealed again in our day is that "the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children" and that families can be eternal ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). Authority has been conferred upon man once again, whereby in sacred temples a man can be eternally sealed to his wife, a woman to her husband, parents to their children, and the extended family eternally linked together.

Dear friends and neighbors, we know that you love your families as we love ours, and we are pleased to share these sacred truths with you.

9. People have been called of God to teach you.

Approximately 60,000 young men and women on missions worldwide are

called to teach interested parties about the doctrine of the Church. They pay their own way and for a time set themselves apart from worldly pursuits in order to teach you. If you will invite them, they will teach you and answer your questions.

10. You can know with assurance that these things are true.

A time-tested, heaven-inspired solution to knowing the truth about the Book of Mormon or other matters is set forth by Moroni, the last Book of Mormon prophet. He said:

"And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

"And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things" (Moroni 10:4-5).

My father-in-law, myself, and millions of others have put Moroni's declaration and promise to the test and found that these things are true. My sincere promise is that you can do as Moroni has prompted and experience the same rewarding result.

I humbly declare that Jesus is the Christ, the literal Son of God, and that His gospel has been restored to the earth in our day for the benefit and blessing of all mankind, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elders Loren C. Dunn and John B. Dickson of the Seventy have just spoken to us.

We will now hear from Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

The Creation

We will long remember this inspiring conference in the new Conference Center. Not long ago, there was only a deep hole in the ground where this building now stands. We have watched its construction with interest and awe.

The process of construction is truly inspiring to me. From conception to completion, any major building project reflects upon the work of the Master Creator. In fact, the Creation—of planet Earth and of life upon it—undergirds all other creative capability. Any man-made creation is possible only because of our divine Creator. The people who design and build are given life and capacity by that Creator. And all materials used in the construction of an edifice are ultimately derived from the rich resources of the earth. The Lord declared, “The earth is full, and there is enough and to spare; yea, I prepared all things.”¹

It is difficult for mortal minds to comprehend the majesty of the Creation. It is much easier for us to think about good things to eat or fun things to do. But I would like to stretch our minds to think of things beyond our easy grasp. The creation of man and woman was wondrous and great.² So was the creation of the earth as their mortal dwelling place.

The entire Creation was planned by God. A council in heaven was once convened in which we participated.³ There our Heavenly Father announced His divine plan.⁴ It is also called the plan of happiness,⁵ the plan of salvation,⁶ the plan of redemption,⁷ the plan of restoration,⁸ the plan of mercy,⁹ the plan of deliverance,¹⁰ and the everlasting gospel.¹¹ The purpose of the plan is to provide opportunity for the spirit children of God to progress toward an eternal exaltation.

Components of the plan

The plan required the Creation, and that in turn required both the Fall and the Atonement. These are the three fundamental components of the plan. The creation of a paradisiacal planet came from God.¹² Mortality and death came into the world through the Fall of Adam.¹³ Immortality and the possibility of eternal life were provided by the Atonement of Jesus Christ.¹⁴ The Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement were planned long before the actual work of the Creation began.

While visiting the British Museum in London one day, I read a most unusual book. It is not scripture. It is an English translation of an ancient Egyptian manuscript. From it I quote a dialogue between the Father and the Son. Referring to His Father, Jehovah—the premortal Lord—says:

“He took the clay from the hand of the angel, and made Adam according to Our image and likeness, and He left him lying for forty days and forty nights without putting breath into him. And He heaved sighs over him daily, saying, ‘If I put breath into this [man], he must suffer many pains.’ And I said unto My Father, ‘Put breath into him; I will be an advocate for him.’ And My Father said unto Me, ‘If I put breath into him, My beloved Son, Thou wilt be obliged to go down into the world, and to suffer many pains for him before Thou shalt have redeemed him, and made him to come back to his primal state.’ And I said unto My Father, ‘Put breath into him; I will be his advocate, and I will go down into the world, and will fulfil Thy command.’”¹⁵

Although this text is not scripture, it reaffirms scriptures that teach of the deep and compassionate love of the Father for the Son, and of the Son for us—

attesting that Jesus volunteered willingly to be our Savior and Redeemer.¹⁶

The Lord God declared, "This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."¹⁷ He who, under direction of the Father, had created the earth, subsequently came into mortality to do the will of His Father¹⁸ and to fulfill all prophecies of the Atonement.¹⁹ His Atonement would redeem every soul from the penalties of personal transgression, on conditions that He set.²⁰

Phases of the Creation

Each phase of the Creation was well planned before it was accomplished. Scripture tells us that "the Lord God, created all things . . . spiritually, before they were naturally upon the face of the earth."²¹

The physical Creation itself was staged through ordered periods of time. In Genesis²² and Moses,²³ those periods are called *days*. But in the book of Abraham, each period is referred to as a *time*.²⁴ Whether termed a *day*, a *time*, or an *age*, each phase was a period between two identifiable events—a division of eternity.²⁵

Period one included the creation of atmospheric heavens and physical earth, culminating in the emergence of light from darkness.²⁶

In period two, the waters were divided between the surface of the earth and its atmospheric heavens. Provision was made for clouds and rain to give life to all that would later dwell upon the earth.²⁷

In period three, plant life began. The earth was organized to bring forth grass, herbs, trees, and vegetation—each growing from its own seed.²⁸

Period four was a time of further development. Lights in the expanse of the heaven were organized so there could be seasons and other means of measuring time. During this period, the sun, the moon, the stars, and the earth were

placed in proper relationship to one another.²⁹ The sun, with its vast stores of hydrogen, was to serve as a giant furnace to provide light and heat for the earth and life upon it.³⁰

In period five, fish, fowl, and "every living creature" were added.³¹ They were made fruitful and able to multiply—in the sea and on the earth—each after its own kind.³²

In the sixth period, creation of life continued. The beasts of the earth were made after their kind, cattle after their kind, and everything which "creepeth upon the earth"—again, after its own kind.³³ Then the Gods counseled together and said:

"Let us go down and form man in our image, after our likeness. . . .

"So the Gods went down to organize man in their own image, in the image of the Gods to form they him, male and female to form they them."³⁴

Thus, Adam and Eve were formed.³⁵ And they were blessed to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."³⁶

The seventh period was designated as a time of rest.³⁷

The Creation testifies of a Creator

I testify that the earth and all life upon it are of divine origin. The Creation did not happen by chance. It did not come *ex nihilo* (out of nothing). And human minds and hands able to build buildings or create computers are not accidental. It is God who made us and not we ourselves. We are His people!³⁸ The Creation itself testifies of a Creator. We cannot disregard the divine in the Creation. Without our grateful awareness of God's hand in the Creation, we would be just as oblivious to our provider as are goldfish swimming in a bowl. With deep gratitude, we echo the words

of the Psalmist, who said, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches."³⁹

Purpose and destiny of the earth

This earth is but one of many creations over which God presides. "Worlds without number have I created," He said. "And I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten."⁴⁰ Grand as it is, planet Earth is part of something even grander—that great plan of God. Simply summarized, the earth was created that families might be. Scripture explains that a husband and wife "shall be one flesh, and all this that the earth might answer the end of its creation."⁴¹

And as part of the planned destiny of the earth and its inhabitants, here our kindred dead are also to be redeemed.⁴² Families are to be sealed together for all eternity.⁴³ A welding link is to be forged between the fathers and the children. In our time, a whole, complete, and perfect union of all dispensations, keys, and powers is to be welded together.⁴⁴ For these sacred purposes, holy temples now dot the earth.

Though our understanding of the Creation is limited, we know enough to appreciate its supernal significance. And that store of knowledge will be augmented in the future. Scripture declares:

"In that day when the Lord shall come [again], he shall reveal all things—

"Things which have passed, and hidden things which no man knew, things of the earth, by which it was made, and the purpose and the end thereof—

"Things most precious, things that are above, and things that are beneath, things that are in the earth, and upon the earth, and in heaven."⁴⁵

Yes, further light and knowledge will come. The Lord said:

"If there be bounds set to the heavens or to the seas, or to the dry land, or to the sun, moon, or stars—

"All the times of their revolutions, all the appointed days, months, and years, . . . and all their glories, laws, and set times, shall be revealed in the days of the dispensation of the fulness of times."⁴⁶

Eventually "the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory."⁴⁷ At the Second Coming of the Lord, the earth will be changed once again. It will be returned to its paradisiacal state and be made new. There will be a new heaven and a new earth.⁴⁸

Our responsibilities

Meanwhile, brothers and sisters, we should understand our significant responsibilities. Both the creations of God and the creations of man teach us the importance of each component. Do you think that the absence of one piece of granite from the face of this building would be noticed? Of course it would!

So it is with each son or daughter of God. We cannot let "the head say unto the feet it [has] no need of the feet; for without the feet how shall the body be able to stand?"⁴⁹ Just as "the body [has] need of every member,"⁵⁰ so the family has need of every member. All members of a family are to be linked, sealed, and "edified together, that the system may be kept perfect."⁵¹

The Creation, great as it is, is not an end in itself but a means to an end. We come to the earth for a brief period of time, endure our tests and trials, and prepare to move onward and upward to a glorious homecoming.⁵² Our thoughts and deeds while here will surely be more purposeful if we understand God's plan and are thankful for and obedient to His commandments.⁵³

As beneficiaries of the divine Creation, what shall we do? We should care

for the earth, be wise stewards over it, and preserve it for future generations.⁵⁴ And we are to love and care for one another.⁵⁵

We are to be creators in our own right—builders of an individual faith in God, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and faith in His Church. We are to build families and be sealed in holy temples. We are to build the Church and kingdom of God upon the earth.⁵⁶ We are to prepare for our own divine destiny—glory, immortality, and eternal lives.⁵⁷ These supernal blessings can all be ours through our faithfulness.

I testify that God lives! Jesus is the Christ and Creator! He is Lord over all the earth. He has established His Church in these latter days to accomplish His divine purposes. Joseph Smith is the great prophet of the Restoration. President Gordon B. Hinckley is the Lord's prophet today, whom I sustain with all my heart, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 104:17.
2. See Russell M. Nelson, "The Magnificence of Man," *Ensign*, Jan. 1988, 64–69; see also Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 110–14; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 85–87.
3. See *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 349–50, 365.
4. See 2 Nephi 9:13; Alma 34:9; Abraham 3:22–27.
5. See Alma 42:8, 16.
6. See Jarom 1:2; Alma 24:14; 42:5; Moses 6:62.
7. See Jacob 6:8; Alma 12:25–34; 17:16; 18:39; 22:13; 29:2; 34:16, 31; 39:18; 42:11–13.
8. See Alma 41:2.
9. See Alma 42:15, 31; 2 Nephi 9:6.
10. See 2 Nephi 11:5.
11. See Revelation 14:6; Doctrine and Covenants 27:5; 36:5; 68:1; 77:8–9, 11; 79:1; 84:103; 99:1; 101:22, 39; 106:2; 109:29; 65; 124:88; 128:17; 133:36; 135:3, 7; 138:19, 25; Joseph Smith—History 1:34.
12. Latter-day revelation affirms that Michael (known also as Adam; see D&C 27:11; 107:54; 128:21) participated in the process of creation as well.
13. See 2 Nephi 2:25; Moses 6:48; Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 6:49.
14. See 2 Nephi 2:21–28.
15. "Discourse on Abbatôn by Timothy, Archbishop of Alexandria," in *Coptic Martyrdoms etc. in the Dialect of Upper Egypt*, ed. and trans. E. A. Wallis Budge (1914), 482. Timothy, archbishop of Alexandria, died in A.D. 385. Brackets are included in Budge's English translation.
16. See John 3:16; 10:14–15, 17–18.
17. Moses 1:39.
18. See 3 Nephi 27:13.
19. For a comprehensive study of the prophecies of prophets pertaining to Christ, see D. Kelly Ogden and R. Val Johnson, "All the Prophets Prophesied of Christ," *Ensign*, Jan. 1994, 31–37; *Liahona*, Apr. 1994, 10–18.
20. See 2 Nephi 9:20–27; Mosiah 26:21–23; Doctrine and Covenants 138:19.
21. Moses 3:5; see also Moses 6:51.
22. See Genesis 1:5–2:3.
23. See Moses 2:5–3:3.
24. See Abraham 4:8–5:3.
25. Abraham likened one day in the Lord's time to 1,000 years (see Abraham 3:4).
26. See Genesis 1:1–5; Moses 2:1–5; Abraham 4:1–5.
27. See Genesis 1:6–8; Moses 2:6–8; Abraham 4:6–8.
28. See Genesis 1:9–13; Moses 2:9–13; Abraham 4:9–13.
29. See Genesis 1:14–19; Moses 2:14–19; Abraham 4:14–19.
30. See Henry Eyring, "World of Evidence, World of Faith," in *Of Heaven and Earth: Reconciling Scientific Thought with LDS Theology*, ed. and comp. David L. Clark (1998), 59.
31. Abraham 4:20–21.
32. See Genesis 1:20–23; Moses 2:20–23; Abraham 4:22–23.
33. See Genesis 1:24–31; Moses 2:24–31; Abraham 4:24–31.

34. Abraham 4:26–27.
35. Note that the Lord called the first man *and woman* “Adam” (see Genesis 5:2; Moses 6:9).
36. Genesis 1:28; Moses 2:28; see also Abraham 4:28; Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 1:30.
37. See Genesis 2:1–3; Moses 3:1–3; Abraham 5:1–3.
38. See Psalm 100:3.
39. Psalm 104:24.
40. Moses 1:33; see also Doctrine and Covenants 76:23–24.
41. Doctrine and Covenants 49:16.
42. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:15.
43. See Doctrine and Covenants 2:2–3; 49:17; 138:48; Joseph Smith—History 1:39.
44. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:18.
45. Doctrine and Covenants 101:32–34.
46. Doctrine and Covenants 121:30–31.
47. Articles of Faith 1:10.
48. See Revelation 21:1; Ether 13:9; Doctrine and Covenants 29:23–24.
49. Doctrine and Covenants 84:109.
50. Doctrine and Covenants 84:110.
51. Doctrine and Covenants 84:110; see also 1 Corinthians 12:14–26.
52. See Psalm 116:15; Alma 42:8.
53. See Doctrine and Covenants 59:20–21.
54. The Lord has entrusted us to care for the earth. He said: “It is expedient that I, the Lord, should make every man accountable, as a steward over earthly blessings, which I have made and prepared for my creatures. I, the Lord, stretched out the heavens, and built the earth, my very handiwork; and all things therein are mine. And it is my purpose to provide for my saints, for all things are mine” (D&C 104:13–15; see also Revelation 7:3).
55. See John 13:34–35; 15:12; Romans 12:10–13:8; Galatians 5:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 John 3:11–4:12; Mosiah 4:15; Doctrine and Covenants 88:123.
56. See Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38 (King James Version, Matthew 6:33, footnote a).

57. See Romans 2:7; Doctrine and Covenants 75:5; 128:12; 132:19–24.

President Monson

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir, the combined choir from Brigham Young University, and the men of the Tabernacle Choir joined by returned missionaries, and their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given this conference; the doctors, Church Health Unit nurses, and ambulance services which have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on Temple Square and in the Conference Center.

We also express appreciation to local and national media representatives for their coverage of the conference and to the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations, cable systems, and Internet services who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference to many countries.

As you leave the conference session this afternoon, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will be the concluding speaker for this conference. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing “Sing We Now at Parting.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Ronald T. Halverson of the Seventy. This conference will then be adjourned for six months.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

A time of new beginnings

I'm sure you are rather weary of listening to me. I'll do my best.

What a wonderful conference this has been, my brethren and sisters. We have rejoiced in all that has occurred. The speakers have been inspired, every one of them. The music has been superb. The prayers have been beautiful and touching. We have been uplifted in every way as we have participated together.

There was a popular piece of music when I was young that said, "The song is ended but the melody lingers on."¹

I pray that will be the case with this conference. When we leave, I hope we will have pleasant recollections and fond memories of this great occasion.

As we return to our homes, let us go with thanksgiving in our hearts. We have been present and have participated in the proceedings of the 170th general conference of the Church. We have for the first time used this great new building. We have been here April 1 and 2 of the year 2000, the opening of a new century and a great new millennium. There is something wonderfully significant about all of this. It is a time of new beginnings.

I hope that each of us will long remember what we have heard, but more importantly, what we have felt. May it become an anchor in our lives, a guide by which to live, a training time where we learned to shape our actions toward others and our attitudes toward ourselves.

Apply conference messages at home

I pray that the effects of this conference will be felt in our homes.

I hope that each one of us will be a better husband or wife, kinder to one another, more thoughtful, more restrained

in criticism, and more generous with compliments. I hope that as fathers and mothers we will strive more fully to rear our children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," (Ephesians 6:4), treating them with respect and love, giving encouragement at every opportunity, and subduing our critical remarks. I hope that as sons and daughters we will be more respectful than we have been, that we will look to our parents with the knowledge that they love us, and that we will try to be more obedient in following their counsel.

Reach out with love in missionary service

Let us as Latter-day Saints reach out to others not of our faith. Let us never act in a spirit of arrogance or with a holier-than-thou attitude. Rather, may we show love and respect and helpfulness toward them. We are greatly misunderstood, and I fear that much of it is of our own making. We can be more tolerant, more neighborly, more friendly, more of an example than we have been in the past. Let us teach our children to treat others with friendship, respect, love, and admiration. That will yield a far better result than will an attitude of egotism and arrogance.

Let us study the ways of the Lord, reading His life and teachings in the sacred scripture He has given us. Let us take a little time to meditate, to think of what we can do to improve our lives and to become better examples of what a Latter-day Saint should be.

Let us reach out to the world in our missionary service, teaching all who will listen concerning the restoration of the gospel, speaking without fear but also without self-righteousness, of the First

Vision, testifying of the Book of Mormon and of the restoration of the priesthood. Let us, my brothers and sisters, get on our knees and pray for the opportunity to bring others into the joy of the gospel.

Report and announcement on temples

Now, in closing, may I give you just a very brief report on temples. As of today we have 76 in operation. That is many more than we had a few years ago. We will dedicate the Palmyra temple this coming Thursday. That will be a great occasion. The temple overlooks the Sacred Grove. Then on Sunday—next Sunday—we will dedicate the Fresno California Temple. We plan on dedicating altogether 36 new temples in the year 2000. I think we will accomplish all we set out to do. Quite a number of others in construction or announced will not be completed until 2001 or 2002.

Now, additionally, we announce at this conference that we hope to build a house of the Lord in Aba, Nigeria. Brother Pace, we may be delayed in Ghana, but we hope there will be no delay in Nigeria. Others in Asunción, Paraguay; Helsinki, Finland; Lubbock, Texas; Snowflake, Arizona; and somewhere in the Tri-Cities area of the state of Washington.

So we shall go on in the process of bringing temples to the people.

Expression of love, blessing, testimony

Now, we have been on a great shake-down cruise, as it were. This building has been filled to capacity. I don't see an empty seat anywhere. It is a miracle! It is a tremendous and wonderful thing, for which we thank the Lord with all our hearts.

I leave with you my love and blessing and my testimony of this divine work. God our Eternal Father lives. You know that. I know that. His Beloved Son, the resurrected Redeemer of the world, stands at His side. You know that also, as do I. They appeared to the Prophet Joseph and ushered in this glorious work. How fortunate we are to be a part of it. Let us stand a little higher and let the nobility of good character shine through our lives, I humbly pray in the name of Him who is our great Redeemer, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

God bless you, my beloved friends, my brothers, my sisters, my associates, in this great and holy work. Thank you.

NOTE

1. Irving Berlin, "The Song Is Ended (but the Melody Lingers On)" (1927).

The choir sang "Sing We Now at Parting."

Elder Ronald T. Halverson offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Tabernacle Choir provided music for the Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Craig Jessop, Mack Wilberg, and Barlow Bradford directed the choir. John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, and Linda Margetts were the organists.

A combined choir from Brigham Young University provided music for the Saturday afternoon session. Ronald J. Staheli and Rosalind Hall directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

Music for the general priesthood session was provided by male members of the Tabernacle Choir, joined by returned missionaries. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music

and accompaniments on the organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

F. Michael Watson

Clerk of the Conference

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